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THE

WORKS

OF

PRESIDENT EDWARDS:

IN TEN VOLUMES.

VOL. VI.

CONTAINING,

I. TWENTY SERMONS. II. PRACTICAL SERMONS.

NEW YORK:
G. & C. & H. CARVILL.
1830.

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TWENTY SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

PREFACE.

The following Sermons were not transcribed with any view to a publication in this country. In the year 1773, I was desired by a gentleman in Scotland, to transcribe a number of the author's sermons on some of the most plain, practical, and experimental subjects, that they might be printed there. The reader will hence see, that it was not the design to pick out the most curious and elaborate discourses, but those of a different stamp. Among the very numerous discourses on practical and experimental subjects out of which I was to choose, it was no easy task to determine which to publish and which to omit. And different persons would, no doubt, in this case, judge differently. Many sermons, equally worthy of the light as these, were omitted, and, perhaps, some that were more worthy: yet, it is hoped, that the public will judge these not unworthy of their acceptance and attention

The reader cannot be insensible of the disadvantages attending all posthumous works, especially sermons, which are generally prepared only for the next Sabbath, and for a particular congregation, and often in great haste, and amidst many avocations. Yet, if in these sermons he shall find the most important truths exhibited, and pressed home on the conscience with that pungency, which tends to awaken, convince, humble, and edify; if he shall find that serious strain of piety, which, in spite of himself, forces upon him a serious frame of mind; if, in the perusal, he cannot but be ashamed and alarmed at himself, and in some measure feel the reality and weight of eternal things; if, at least he, like Agrippa, shall be almost persuaded to be a Christian; I presume he will not grudge the time requisite to peruse what is now offered him. These, if I mistake not, are the great ends to be aimed at in all sermons, whether preached or printed, and are ends which can never be accomplished by those modern fashionable discourses which are delivered under the name of sermons, but really are mere harangues on such moral subjects as have been much better handled by Cicero, Seneca, or the Spectator, and contain very little more of the gospel than is to be found in the heathen philosophers. That the important ends now mentioned, may be indeed accomplished by this publication to every reader, is the sincere desire of the public's humble servant,

JONATHAN EDWARDS.

New-Haven, December 21, 1779.

N. B. The reader will observe some sermons not dated. Those I suppose, were written before the year 1733, when the author was thirty years of age; as in that year he began to date his sermons, and all written after that, appear to be dated.

SERMON I.*

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL IS TO BE SOUGHT.

GEN. VI. 22.

Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

CONCERNING these words, I would observe three things:

1. What it was that God commanded Noah, to which these words refer. It was the building of an ark, according to the particular direction of God, against the time when the flood of waters should come; and the laying up of food for himself, his family, and the other animals, which were to be preserved in the ark. We have the particular commands which God gave him respecting this affair, from the 14th verse, "Make thee an ark of gopher wood," &c.

2. We may observe the *special design* of the work which God had enjoined upon Noah: It was to save himself and his family, when the rest of the world should be drowned. See ver. 17, 18.

3. We may observe Noah's obedience. He obeyed God: *Thus did Noah.* And his obedience was thorough and universal: *According to* ALL *that God commanded him, so did he.* He not only began, but he went through his work, which God had commanded him to undertake for his salvation from the flood. To this obedience, the apostle refers in Heb. xi. 7. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house."

DOCTRINE.—*We should be willing to engage in, and go through great undertakings, in order to our own salvation.*

The building of the ark, which was enjoined upon Noah, that he and his family might be saved, was a great undertaking: The ark was a building of vast size; the length of it being three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A cubit, till of late, was by learned men reckoned

* Dated September, 1740.

to be equal to a foot and a half of our measure. But lately, some learned men of our nation have travelled into Egypt, and other ancient countries, and have measured some ancient buildings there, which are of several thousand years' standing, and of which ancient histories give us the dimensions in cubits; particularly the pyramids of Egypt, which are standing entire at this day. By measuring these, and by comparing the measure in feet with the ancient accounts of their measure in cubits, a cubit is found to be almost two and twenty inches. Therefore learned men more lately reckon a cubit much larger than they did formerly. So that the ark, reckoned so much larger every way, will appear to be almost of double the bulk which was formerly ascribed to it. According to this computation of the cubit, it was more than five hundred and fifty feet long, about ninety feet broad, and about fifty feet in height.

To build such a structure, with all those apartments and divisions in it which were necessary, and in such a manner as to be fit to float upon the water for so long a time, was *then* a great undertaking. It took Noah, with all the workmen he employed, an hundred and twenty years, or thereabouts, to build it. For so long it was, that the Spirit of God strove, and the long suffering God waited on the old world, as you may see in Gen. vi. 3. "My spirit shall not always strive with man; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." All this while the ark was a preparing, as appears by 1 Pet. iii. 20. "When once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." It was a long time that Noah constantly employed himself in this business. Men would esteem that undertaking very great, which should keep them constantly employed even for one half of that time. Noah must have had a great and constant care upon his mind for these one hundred and twenty years, in superintending this work, and in seeing that all was done exactly according to the directions which God had given him.

Not only was Noah himself continually employed, but it required a great number of workmen to be constantly employed, during all that time, in procuring, and collecting, and fitting the materials, and in putting them together in due form. How great a thing was it for Noah to undertake such a work! For beside the continual care and labour, it was a work of vast expense. It is not probable that any of that wicked generation would put to a finger to help forward such a work, which, doubtless, they believed was merely the fruit of Noah's folly, without full wages. Noah must needs have been very rich, to be able to bear the expense of such a work, and to pay so many workmen for so long a time. It would have been a very great expense for a prince; and, doubtless, Noah was very rich, as Abraham and Job were afterwards. But it is probable that Noah spent all his

worldly substance in this work, thus manifesting his faith in the word of God, by selling all he had. as believing there would surely come a flood which would destroy all; so that if he should keep what he had, it would be of no service to him. Herein he has set us an example, showing us how we ought to sell all for our salvation.

Noah's undertaking was of great difficulty, as it exposed him to the continual reproaches of all his neighbours, for that whole one hundred and twenty years. None of them believed what he told them of a flood, which was about to drown the world. For a man to undertake such a vast piece of work, under a notion that it should be the means of saving him, when the world should be destroyed, it made him the continual laughing-stock of the world. When he was about to hire workmen, doubtless all laughed at him, and we may suppose, that though the workmen consented to work for wages, yet they laughed at the folly of him who employed them. When the ark was begun, we may suppose that every one that passed by and saw such a huge hulk stand there, laughed at it, calling it *Noah's folly*.

In these days, men are with difficulty brought to do or submit to that which makes them the objects of the reproach of all their neighbours. Indeed, if while *some* reproach them, *others* stand by them and honour them, this will support them. But it is very difficult for a man to go on in a way wherein he makes himself the laughing stock of the *whole* world, and wherein he can find none who do not despise him. Where is the man that can stand the shock of such a trial for twenty years?

But in such an undertaking as this, Noah, at the divine direction, engaged, and went through it, that himself and his family might be saved from the common destruction which was shortly about to come on the world. He began, and also made an end: "According to all that God commanded him, so did he." Length of time did not weary him: He did not grow weary of his vast expense. He stood the shock of the derision of all his neighbours, and of all the world, year after year: He did not grow weary of being their laughing-stock, so as to give over his enterprise; but persevered in it till the ark was finished. After this, he was at the trouble and charge of procuring stores for the maintenance of his family, and of all the various kinds of creatures for so long a time. Such an undertaking he engaged in and went through in order to a *temporal* salvation. How great an undertaking, then, should men be willing to engage in and go through, in order to their *eternal* salvation! A salvation from an eternal deluge; from being overwhelmed with the billows of God's wrath, of which Noah's flood was but a shadow.

I shall particularly handle this doctrine under the three following propositions:

I. There is a work or business which must be undertaken and accomplished by men, if they would be saved.

II. This business is a *great* undertaking.

III. Men should be willing to enter upon and go through this undertaking, though it be great, seeing it is for their *own salvation.*

I. Prop. There is a work or business which men must enter upon and accomplish, in order to their salvation.—Men have no reason to expect to be saved in idleness, or to go to heaven in a way of doing nothing. No; in order to it, there is a great work, which must be not only begun, but finished. I shall speak upon this proposition, in answer to two inquiries.

Inq. 1. What is this work or business which must be undertaken and accomplished, in order to the salvation of men.

Ans. It is the work of seeking salvation in a way of constant observance of all the duty to which God directs us in his word. If we would be saved, we must seek salvation. For, although men do not obtain heaven of themselves, yet they do not go thither accidentally, or without any intention or endeavours of their own. God, in his word, hath directed men to seek their salvation, as they would hope to obtain it. There is a race that is set before them, which they must run, and in that race come off victors, in order to their winning the prize.

The Scriptures have told us what particular duties must be performed by us in order to our salvation. It is not sufficient that men seek their salvation only in the observance of *some* of those duties, but they must be observed universally. The work we have to do is not an obedience only to some, but to all the commands of God; a compliance with every institution of worship; a diligent use of all the appointed means of grace; a doing of all duty towards God and towards man. It is not sufficient that men have some respect to all the commands of God, and that they may be said to seek their salvation in some sort of observance of all the commands; but they must be devoted to it. They must not make this a business by the bye, or a thing in which they are negligent and careless, or which they do with a slack hand; but it must be their great business, being attended to as their great concern. They must not only seek, but strive; they must do what their hand findeth to do with their might, as men thoroughly engaged in their minds, and influenced and set forward by great desire and strong resolution. They must act as those that see so much of the importance of religion above all other things, that every thing else must be as an occasional affair, and nothing must stand in competition with its duties. This must be *the one* thing they do; Phil. iii. 13. "This one thing I do."—It must be the business to which they make all other affairs give place, and to which they are ready to make

other things a sacrifice. They must be ready to part with pleasures, and honour, estate, and life, and to sell all, that they may successfully accomplish this business.

It is required of every man, that he not only do *something* in this business, but that he should *devote* himself to it; which implies that he should give up himself to it, all his affairs, and all his temporal enjoyments. This is the import of taking up the cross, of taking Christ's yoke upon us, and of denying ourselves to follow Christ. The rich young man, who came kneeling to Christ to know what he should do to be saved, (Mark x. 17.) in some sense sought salvation, but did not obtain it. In some sense he kept all the commands from his youth up; but was not cordially devoted to this business.—He had not made a sacrifice to it of all his enjoyments, as appeared when Christ came to try him; he would not part with his estate for him.

It is not only necessary that men should seem to be very much engaged, and appear as if they were devoted to their duty for a little while; but there must be a *constant* devotedness, in a persevering way, as Noah was to the business of building the ark, going on with that great, difficult, and expensive affair, till it was finished, and till the flood came.—Men must not only be diligent in the use of the means of grace, and be anxiously engaged to escape eternal ruin, till they obtain hope and comfort: but afterwards they must persevere in the duties of religion, till the flood come, the flood of death.—Not only must the faculties, strength, and possessions of men be devoted to this work, but also their time and their lives; they must give up their whole lives to it, even to the very day when God causes the storms and floods to come. This is the work or business which men have to do in order to their salvation.

INQ. 2. Why is it needful that men should undertake to go through such a work in order to their salvation?

ANS. 1. Not to *merit* salvation, or to recommend them to the saving mercy of God. Men are not saved on the *account* of any work of theirs, and yet they are not saved *without* works. If we merely consider what it is for which, or on the account of which men are saved, no work at all in men is necessary to their salvation. In this respect they are saved wholly without any work of theirs, Tit. iii. 5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."—We must indeed be saved on the account of works; but not our own. It is on account of the works which Christ hath done for us. Works are the fixed price of eternal life; it is fixed by an eternal, unalterable rule of righteousness. But since the fall, there is no hope of *our* doing these works, without salvation offered freely, without money and without price.—But,

2. Though it be not needful that we do anything to merit salvation, which Christ hath fully merited for all who believe in him; yet God, for wise and holy ends, hath appointed, that we should come to final salvation in no other way, but that of good works done by us.

God did not save Noah on account of the labour and expense he was at in building the ark. Noah's salvation from the flood was an instance of the free and distinguishing mercy of God. Nor did God stand in need of Noah's care, or cost, or labour, to build an ark. The same power which created the world, and which brought the flood of waters upon the earth, could have made the ark in an instant, without any care or cost of Noah, or any of the labour of those many workmen who were employed for so long a time. Yet God was pleased to appoint, that Noah should be saved in this way. So God hath appointed that man should not be saved without his undertaking and doing this work of which I have been speaking; and therefore we are commanded *to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling*, Philip. ii. 12.

There are many wise ends to be answered by the establishment of such a work as pre-requisite to salvation. The glory of God requires it. For although God stands in no need of anything that men do to recommend them to his saving mercy, yet it would reflect much on the glory of God's wisdom and holiness, to bestow salvation on men in such a way as tends to encourage them in sloth and wickedness; or in any other way than that which tends to promote diligence and holiness. Man was made capable of action, with many powers of both body and mind fitting him for it. He was made for business and not idleness: and the main business for which he was made, was that of religion. Therefore it becomes the wisdom of God to bestow salvation and happiness on man, in such a way as tends most to promote his end in this respect, and to stir him up to a diligent use of his faculties and talents.

It becomes the wisdom of God so to order it, that things of great value and importance should not be obtained without great labour and diligence. Much human learning and great moral accomplishments are not to be obtained without care and labour. It is wisely so ordered, in order to maintain in man a due sense of the value of those things which are excellent. If great things were in common easily obtained, it would have a tendency to cause men to slight and undervalue them. Men commonly despise those things which are cheap, and which are obtained without difficulty.

Although the work of obedience performed by men, be not necessary in order to merit salvation; yet it is necessary in order to their being prepared for it. Men cannot be prepared for salvation without seeking it in such a way as hath been described.

This is necessary, in order that they have a proper sense of their own necessities and unworthiness; and in order that they be prepared and disposed to prize salvation when bestowed, and be properly thankful to God for it. The requisition of so great a work in order to our salvation, is no way inconsistent with the fredom of the offer of salvation; as after all, it is both offered and bestowed without any respect to our work, as the price or meritorious cause of our salvation, as I have already explained. Besides, salvation bestowed in this way is better for us, more for our advantage and happiness, both in this and the future world, than if it were given without this requisition.

II. PROP. This work or business, which must be done in order to the salvation of men, is a *great* undertaking. It often appears so to men upon whom it is urged. Utterly to break off from all their sins, and to give up themselves for ever to the business of religion, without making a reserve of any one lust, submitting to and complying with every command of God, in all cases, and persevering therein, appears to many so great a thing, that they are in vain urged to undertake it. In so doing it seems to them, that they should give up themselves to a perpetual bondage. The greater part of men therefore choose to put it off, and keep it at as great a distance as they can. They cannot bear to think of entering immediately on such a hard service, and rather than do it, they will run the risk of eternal damnation, by putting it off to an uncertain future opportunity.

Although the business of religion is far from really being as it appears to such men, for the devil will be sure, if he can, to represent it in false colours to sinners, and make it appear as black and terrible as he can; yet it is indeed a great business, a great undertaking, and it is fit that all who are urged to it, should count the cost beforehand, and be sensible of the difficulty attending it, For though the devil discourages many from this undertaking, by representing it to be more difficult than it really is; yet with others he takes a contrary course, and flatters them it is a very easy thing, a trivial business, which may be done at any time when they please, and so emboldens them to defer it from that consideration. But let none conceive any other notion of that business of religion, which is absolutely necessary to their salvation, than that it is a great undertaking. It is so on the following accounts.

1. It is a business of great *labour* and *care*. There are many commands to be obeyed, many duties to be done, duties to God, duties to our neighbour, and duties to ourselves.—There is much opposition in the way of these duties from *without*. There is a subtle and powerful adversary laying all manner of blocks in the way. There are innumerable temptations of Satan to be resisted and repelled. There is great opposition

from the world, innumerable snares laid on every side, many rocks and mountains to be passed over, many streams to be passed through, and many flatteries and enticements from a vain world to be resisted. There is a great opposition from *within;* a dull and sluggish heart, which is exceedingly averse from that activity in religion which is necessary; a carnal heart, which is averse from religion and spiritual exercises, and continually drawing the contrary way; and a proud and a deceitful heart, in which corruption will be exerting itself in all manner of ways. So that nothing can be done to any effect without a most strict and careful watch, great labour and strife.

3. It is a *constant* business.—In that business which requires great labour, men love now and then to have a space of relaxation, that they may rest from their extraordinary labour. But this is a business which must be followed every day. Luke ix. 23, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross *daily*, and follow me."—We must never give ourselves any relaxation from this business; it must be continually prosecuted day after day. If sometimes we make a great stir and bustle concerning religion, but then lay all aside to take our ease, and do so from time to time, it will be of no good effect: we had even as good do nothing at all. The business of religion so followed is never like to come to any good issue, nor is the work ever like to be accomplished to any good purpose.

3. It is a great undertaking, as it is an undertaking of *great expense*.—We must therein sell all: we must follow this business at the expense of all our unlawful pleasures and delights, at the expense of our carnal ease, often at the expense of our substance, of our credit among men, the good will of our neighbours, at the expense of all our earthly friends, and even at the expense of life itself. Herein it is like Noah's undertaking to build the ark, which, as hath been shown, was a costly undertaking: it was expensive to his reputation among men, exposing him to be the continual laughing-stock of all his neighbours and of the whole world: and it was expensive to his estate, and probably cost him all that he had.

4. Sometimes the fear, trouble, and exercise of mind, which are undergone respecting this business, and the salvation of the soul, are great and long continued, before any comfort is obtained. Sometimes persons in this situation labour long in the dark, and sometimes, as it were, in the very fire; they having great distress of conscience, great fears, and many perplexing temptations, before they obtain light and comfort to make their care and labour more easy to them. They sometimes earnestly, and for a long time, seek comfort, but find it not, because they seek it not in a right manner, nor in the right objects. God therefore hides his face. They cry, but

God doth not answer their prayers. They strive, but all seems in vain. They seem to themselves not at all to get forward, or nearer to a deliverance from sin; but to go backward rather than forward. They see no glimmerings of light: things rather appear darker and darker. Insomuch that they are often ready to be discouraged, and to sink under the weight of their present distress, and under the prospect of future misery. In this situation, and under these views, some are almost driven to despair.

Many, after they have obtained some saving comfort, are again involved in darkness and trouble. It is with them as it was with the Christian Hebrews, Heb. x. 32, "After ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions." Some through a melancholy habit and distemper of body, together with Satan's temptations, spend a great part of their lives in distress and darkness, even after they have had some saving comfort.

5. It is a business which, by reason of the many difficulties, snares, and dangers that attend it, requires much instruction, consideration, and *counsel*. There is no business wherein men stand in need of counsel more than in this. It is a difficult undertaking, a hard matter to proceed aright in it. There are ten thousand wrong ways, which men may take; there are many labyrinths whereby many poor souls are entangled and never find the way out; there are many rocks on which thousands of souls have suffered shipwreck, for want of having steered aright.

Men of themselves know not how to proceed in this business, any more than the children of Israel in the wilderness knew where to go without the guidance of the pillar of cloud and fire. There is great need that they search the scriptures, and give diligent heed to the instructions and directions contained in them, as to a light shining in a dark place; and that they ask counsel of those skilled in these matters. And there is no business in which men have so much need of seeking to God by prayer, for his counsel, and that he would lead them in the right way, and show them the strait gate. "For strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it;" yea, there are none that find it without direction from heaven.

The building of the ark was a work of great difficulty on this account, that Noah's wisdom was not sufficient to direct him how to make such a building as should be a sufficient security against such a flood, and which should be a convenient dwelling-place for himself, his family, and all the various kinds of beasts, and birds, and creeping things. Nor could he ever have known how to construct this building, had not God directed him.

6. This business never ends till *life* ends. They that undertake this laborious, careful, expensive, self-denying business, must not expect to rest from their labours, till death shall have put an end to them. The long continuance of the work which Noah undertook was what especially made it a great undertaking. This also was what made the travel of the children of Israel through the wilderness appear so great to them, that it was continued for so long a time. Their spirits failed, they were discouraged, and had not a heart to go through with so great an undertaking.

But such is *this* business that it runs parallel with life, whether it be longer or shorter. Although we should live to a great age, our race and warfare will not be finished till death shall come. We must not expect that an end will be put to our labour, and care, and strife, by any hope of a good estate which we may obtain. Past attainments and past success will not excuse us from what remains for the future, nor will they make future constant labour and care not necessary to our salvation.

III. Men should be willing to engage in and go through this business, however great and difficult it may seem to them, seeing it is for their *own salvation*.—Because,

1. A deluge of wrath will *surely come*. The inhabitants of the old world would not believe that there would come such a flood of waters upon the earth, as that of which Noah told them, though he told them often; neither would they take any care to avoid the destruction. Yet such a deluge did come; nothing of all those things of which Noah had forewarned them, failed.

So there will surely come a more dreadful deluge of divine wrath on this wicked world. We are often forewarned of it in the scriptures, and the world, as then, doth not believe any such thing. Yet the threatening will as certainly be accomplished, as the threatening denounced against the old world. A day of wrath is coming; it will come at its appointed season; it will not tarry, it shall not be delayed one moment beyond its appointed time.

2. All such as do not seasonably undertake and go through the great work mentioned, will surely be *swallowed up* in this deluge. When the floods of wrath shall come, they will universally overwhelm the wicked world: all such as shall not have taken care to prepare an ark, will surely be swallowed up in it: they will find no other way of escape. In vain shall salvation be expected from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains; for the flood shall be above the tops of all the mountains. Or if they shall hide themselves in the caves and dens of the mountains, there the waters of the flood will find them out, and there shall they miserably perish.

As those of the old world who were not in the ark perished, (Gen. vii. 21—23.) so all who shall not have secured to them-

selves a place in the spiritual ark of the Gospel, shall perish much more miserably than the old world.—Doubtless the inhabitants of the old world had many contrivances to save themselves. Some, we may suppose, ascended to the tops of their houses, being driven out of one story to another, till at last they perished. Others climbed to the tops of high towers; who yet were washed thence by the boisterous waves of the rising flood. Some climbed to the tops of trees; others to the tops of mountains, and especially of the highest mountains. But all was in vain; the flood sooner or later swallowed them all up, only Noah and his family, who had taken care to prepare an ark, remained alive.

So it will doubtless be at the end of the world, when Christ shall come to judge the world in righteousness. Some, when they shall look up and see him coming in the clouds of heaven, shall hide themselves in closets, and secret places in their houses. Others, flying to the caves and dens of the earth, shall attempt to hide themselves there. Others shall call upon the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and cover them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.—So it will be after the sentence is pronounced, and wicked men see that terrible fire coming, which is to burn this world for ever, and which will be a deluge of fire and will burn the earth even to the bottoms of the mountains, and to its very centre. (Deut. xxxiii. 22,) "For a fire is kindled in mine anger and shall burn to the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains." I say, when the wicked shall, after the sentence, see this great fire beginning to kindle, and to take hold of this earth; there will be many contrivances devised by them to escape, some flying to caves and holes in the earth, some hiding themselves in one place, and some in another. But let them hide themselves where they will, or let them do what they will, it will be utterly in vain. Every cave shall burn as an oven, the rocks and mountains shall melt with fervent heat, and if they could creep down to the very centre of the earth, still the heat would follow them, and rage with as much vehemence there, as on the very surface.

So when wicked men, who neglect their great work in their lifetime, who are not willing to go through the difficulty and labour of this work, draw near to death, they sometimes do many things to escape death, and put forth many endeavours to lengthen out their lives at least a little longer. For this end they send for physicians, and perhaps many are consulted, and their prescriptions are punctually observed. They also use many endeavours to save their souls from hell. They cry to God; they confess their past sins; they promise future reformation: and, oh! what would they not give for some small

addition to their lives, or some hope of future happiness. But all proves in vain: God hath numbered their days and finished them; and as they have sinned away the day of grace, they must even bear the consequence, and for ever lie down in sorrow.

3. The destruction, when it shall come, will be *infinitely terrible*. The destruction of the old world by the flood was terrible; but that eternal destruction which is coming on the wicked is infinitely more so. That flood of waters was but an image of this awful flood of divine vengeance. When the waters poured down, more like spouts or cataracts, or the fall of a great river, than like rain; what an awful appearance was there of the wrath of God! This however is but an image of that terrible out-pouring of the wrath of God which shall be for ever, yea for ever and ever, on wicked men. And when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the waters burst forth out of the ground, as though they had issued out of the womb, (Job xxxviii. 8,) this was an image of the mighty breakings forth of God's wrath, which shall be, when the flood-gates of wrath shall be drawn up. How may we suppose that the wicked of the old world repented that they had not hearkened to the warnings which Noah had given them, when they saw these dreadful things, and saw that they must perish! How much more will you repent your refusing to hearken to the gracious warnings of the gospel, when you shall see the fire of God's wrath against you, pouring down from heaven, and bursting on all sides out of the bowels of the earth.

4. Though the work which is necessary in order to man's salvation be a great work, yet it is not impossible. What was required of Noah, doubtless appeared a very great and difficult undertaking. Yet he undertook it with resolution, and he was carried through it. So if we undertake this work with the same good-will and resolution, we shall undoubtedly be successful. However difficult it be, yet multitudes have gone through it, and have obtained salvation by the means. It is not a work beyond the faculties of our nature, nor beyond the opportunities which God giveth us. If men will but take warning and hearken to counsel, if they will but be sincere and in good earnest, be seasonable in their work, take their opportunities, use their advantages, be steadfast and not wavering; they shall not fail.

APPLICATION.

The use I would make of this doctrine, is to exhort all to undertake and go through this great work, which they have to do in order to their salvation, and this, let the work seem ever so great and difficult. If your nature be averse to it, and there

seems to be very frightful things in the way, so that your heart is ready to fail at the prospect; yet, seriously consider what has been said, and act a wise part. Seeing it is for yourselves, for your own salvation; seeing it is for so great a salvation, for your deliverance from eternal destruction; and seeing it is of such absolute necessity, in order to your salvation, that the deluge of divine wrath will come, and there will be no escaping it without preparing an ark; is it not best for you to undertake the work, engage in it with your might, and go through it, though this cannot be done without great labour, care, difficulty, and expense?

I would by no means flatter you concerning this work, or go about to make you believe, that you shall find an easy, light business of it: No, I would not have you expect any such thing. I would have you sit down and count the cost; and if you cannot find it in your hearts to engage in a great, hard, laborious, and expensive undertaking, and to persevere in it to the end of life, pretend not to be religious. Indulge yourselves in your ease; follow your pleasures; eat, drink, and be merry; even conclude to go to hell in that way, and never make any more pretences of seeking your salvation. Here consider several things in particular.

1. How *often* you have been warned of the approaching flood of God's wrath. How frequently have you been told of hell, heard the threatenings of the word of God set before you, and been warned to flee from the wrath to come. It is with you as it was with the inhabitants of the old world. Noah warned them abundantly of the approaching flood, and counselled them to take care for their safety. 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20.—Noah warned them in words; and he preached to them. He warned them also in his actions. His building the ark, which took him so long a time, and in which he employed so many hands, was a standing warning to them. All the blows of the hammer and axe, during the progress of that building, were so many calls and warnings to the old world, to take care for their preservation from the approaching destruction. Every knock of the workmen was a knock of Jesus Christ at the door of their hearts: But they would not hearken. All these warnings, though repeated every day, and continued for so long a time, availed nothing.

Now, is it not much so with you, as it was with them? How often have you been warned! how have you heard the warning knocks of the gospel, sabbath after sabbath, for these many years! Yet how have some of you no more regarded them than the inhabitants of the old world regarded the noise of the workmen's tools in Noah's ark!

Obj. But here possibly it may be objected by some, that though it be true they have often been told of hell, yet they never saw any thing of it, and therefore they cannot realize it that there is any such place. They have often heard of hell, and are told that wicked men, when they die, go to a most dreadful place of torment; that hereafter there will be a day of judgment, and that the world will be consumed by fire. But how do they know that it is really so? How do they know what becomes of those wicked men that die? None of them come back to tell them. They have nothing to depend on but the word which they hear. And how do they know that all is not a cunningly-devised fable?

Ans. The sinners of the old world had the very same objection against what Noah told them of a flood about to drown the world. Yet the bare word of God proved to be sufficient evidence that such a thing was coming. What was the reason that none of the many millions then upon earth believed what Noah said, but this, that it was a strange thing, that no such thing had ever before been known? And what a strange story must that of Noah have appeared to them, wherein he told them of a deluge of waters above the tops of the mountains! Therefore it is said, Heb. xi. 7, that "Noah was warned of God of things not seen as yet." It is probable, none could conceive how it could be that the whole world should be drowned in a flood of waters; and all were ready to ask, where there was water enough for it; and by what means it should be brought upon the earth? Noah did not tell them how it should be brought to pass; he only told them that God had said that it should be: and that proved to be enough. The event shewed their folly in not depending on the mere word of God, who was able, who knew how to bring it to pass, and who could not lie.

In like manner the word of God will prove true, in threatening a flood of eternal wrath to overwhelm all the wicked. You will believe it when the event shall prove it, when it shall be too late to profit by the belief. The word of God will never fail; nothing is so sure as that; heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of God shall not pass away. It is firmer than mountains of brass. At the end, the vision will speak and not lie. The decree shall bring forth, and all wicked men shall know that God is the Lord, that he is a God of truth, and that they are fools who will not depend on his word. The wicked of the old world counted Noah a fool for depending so much on the word of God, as to put himself to all the fatigue and expense of building the ark; but the event shewed that they themselves were the fools, and that he was wise.

2. Consider that the Spirit of God will not *always* strive with you: nor will his long-suffering always wait upon you.

So God said concerning the inhabitants of the old world, Gen. vi. 3. "My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." All this while God was striving with them. It was a day of grace with them, and God's long suffering all this while waited upon them. (1 Pet. iii. 20.) "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." All this while they had an opportunity to escape, if they would but hearken and believe God.

Even after the ark was finished, which seems to have been but little before the flood came, still there was an opportunity; the door of the ark stood open for some time. There was some time during which Noah was employed in laying up stores in the ark. Even then it was not too late; the door of the ark yet stood open.—About a week before the flood came, Noah was commanded to begin to gather in the beasts and birds. During this last week still the door of the ark stood open. But on the very day that the flood began to come, while the rain was yet withheld, Noah and his wife, his three sons, and their wives, went into the ark; and we are told, Gen. vii. 16, "That God shut him in." Then the day of God's patience was past; the door of the ark was shut; God himself, who shuts and no man opens, shut the door. Then all hope of their escaping the flood was past; it was too late to repent that they had not hearkened to Noah's warnings, and had not entered into the ark while the door stood open.

After Noah and his family had entered into the ark, and God had shut them in, after the windows of heaven were opened, and they saw how the waters were poured down out of heaven, we may suppose that many of those who were near came running to the door of the ark, knocking, and crying most piteously for entrance. But it was too late; God himself had shut the door, and Noah had no license, and probably no power to open it. We may suppose, they stood knocking and calling, *Open to us, open to us; O let us in; we beg that we may be let in.* And probably some of them pleaded old acquaintance with Noah; that they had always been his neighbours, and had even helped him to build the ark. But all was in vain. There they stood till the waters of the flood came, and without mercy swept them away from the door of the ark.

So it will be with you, if you continue to refuse to hearken to the warnings which are given you. Now God is striving with you; now he is warning you of the approaching flood, and calling upon you sabbath after sabbath. Now the door of the ark stands open. But God's spirit will not always strive with you; his long suffering will not always wait upon you. There is an

appointed day of God's patience, which is as certainly limited as it was to the old world. God hath set your bounds, which you cannot pass. Though now warnings are continued in plenty, yet there will be *last* knocks and *last* calls, the last that ever you shall hear. When the appointed time shall be elapsed, God will shut the door, and you shall never see it open again; for God shutteth and no man openeth.—If you improve not your opportunity before that time, you will cry in vain, "Lord, Lord, open to us." (Matt. xi. 12. and Luke xiii. 25, &c.) While you shall stand at the door with your piteous cries, the flood of God's wrath will come upon you, overwhelm you, and you shall not escape. The tempest shall carry you away without mercy, and you shall be for ever swallowed up and lost.

3. Consider how *mighty* the billows of divine wrath will be when they shall come. The waters of Noah's flood were very great. The deluge was vast; it was very deep; the billows reached fifteen cubits above the highest mountains; and it was an ocean which had no shore; signifying the greatness of that wrath which is coming on wicked men in another world, which will be like a mighty flood of waters overwhelming them, and rising vastly high over their heads, with billows reaching to the very heavens. Those billows will be higher, and heavier than mountains on their poor souls. The wrath of God will be an ocean without shores, as Noah's flood was: it will be misery that will have no end.

The misery of the damned in hell can be better represented by nothing, than by a deluge of misery, a mighty deluge of wrath, which will be ten thousand times worse than a deluge of waters; for it will be a deluge of liquid fire, as in the scriptures it is called a lake of fire and brimstone.—At the end of the world all the wicked shall be swallowed up in a vast deluge of fire, which shall be as great and as mighty as Noah's deluge of water. (See 2 Pet. iii. 5, 6, 7.) After that the wicked will have mighty billows of fire and brimstone eternally rolling over their poor souls, and their miserable tormented bodies. Those billows may be called vast liquid mountains of fire and brimstone. And when one billow shall have gone over their heads, another shall follow, without intermission, giving them no rest day nor night to all eternity.

4. This flood of wrath will probably come upon you suddenly, when you shall think little of it, and it shall seem far from you. so the flood came upon the old world; See Matt. xxiv. 36, &c. —Probably many of them were surprised in the night by the waters bursting in suddenly at their doors, or under the foundations of their houses, coming in upon them in their beds. For when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, the waters, as observed before, burst forth in mighty torrents. To such

a sudden surprise of the wicked of the old world in the night, probably that alludes in Job xxvii. 20. "Terrors take hold on him as waters; a tempest stealeth him away in the night."

So destruction is wont to come on wicked men, who hear many warnings of approaching destruction, and yet will not be influenced by them. For "he that is often reproved, and hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." (Prov. xxix. 1.) And "when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." 1 Thess. v. 3.

5. If you will not hearken to the many warnings which are given you of approaching destruction, you will be guilty of more than *brutish madness*. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib." They know upon whom they are dependent, and whom they must obey, and act accordingly. But you, so long as you neglect your own salvation, act as if you knew not God, your creator and proprietor, nor your dependence upon him.—The very beasts, when they see signs of an approaching storm, will betake themselves to their dens for shelter. Yet you, when abundantly warned of the approaching storm of divine vengeance, will not fly to *the hiding place from the storm, and the covert from the tempest*. The sparrow, the swallow, and other birds, when they are forewarned of approaching winter, will betake themselves to a safer climate. Yet you who have been often forewarned of the piercing blasts of divine wrath, will not, in order to escape them, enter into the New Jerusalem, of most mild and salubrious air, though the gate stands wide open to receive you. The very ants will be diligent in summer to lay up for winter: Yet you will do nothing to lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come. Balaam's ass would not run upon a drawn sword, though his master, for the sake of gain, would expose himself to the sword of God's wrath; and so God made the dumb ass, both in words and actions, to rebuke the madness of the prophet, 1 Pet. ii. 16. In like manner, you, although you have been often warned that the sword of God's wrath is drawn against you and will certainly be thrust through you, if you proceed in your present course, still proceed regardless of the consequence.

So God made the very beasts and birds of the old world to rebuke the madness of the men of that day: For they, even all sorts of them, fled to the ark, while the door was yet open: which the men of that day refused to do; God hereby thus signifying, that their folly was greater than that of the very brute creatures.—Such folly and madness are you guilty of, who refuse to hearken to the warnings that are given you of the approaching flood of the wrath of God.

You have been once more warned to-day, while the door of the ark yet stands open. You have, as it were, once again heard the knocks of the hammer and axe in the building of the ark, to put you in mind that a flood is approaching. Take heed therefore that you do not still stop your ears, treat these warnings with a regardless heart, and still neglect the great work which you have to do, lest the flood of wrath suddenly come upon you, sweep you away, and there be no remedy.

SERMON II.*

THE UNREASONABLENESS OF INDETERMINATION IN RELIGION.

1 Kings xviii. 21.

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

It is the manner of God, before he bestows any signal mercy on a people, first to prepare them for it; and before he removes any awful judgments which he hath brought upon them for their sins, first to cause them to forsake those sins which procured those judgments. We have an instance of this in the context. —It was a time of sore famine in Israel. There had been neither rain nor dew for the space of three years and six months. This famine was brought upon the land for their idolatry. But God was now about to remove this judgment; and therefore, to prepare them for it, sends Elijah to convince them of the folly of idolatry, and to bring them to repentance for it. In order to this, Elijah, by the command of the Lord, goes and shews himself to Ahab, and directs him to send and gather all Israel to him at Mount Carmel, and all the prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves that ate at Jezebel's table, four hundred, that they might determine the matter and bring the controversy to an issue, whether Jehovah or Baal were God. To this end, Elijah proposes, that each should take a bullock, that he should take one, and the prophets of Baal another, that each should cut his bullock in pieces, lay it on the wood, and put no fire under; and that the God who should answer by fire should be concluded to be God.

The text contains an account of what Elijah said to all the people at their first meeting, and of their silence: "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal,

* Dated, June 1734.

then follow him." To which the people, it seems, made no reply. In these words, we may observe,

1. How Elijah expostulates with the people about their halting so long between two opinions; in which expostulation may be observed,

(1.) What the two opinions were, between which they halted, *viz.* Whether the Lord were God, or whether Baal were God. The case in Israel seems to have been this; there were some who were altogether for Baal, and wholly rejected the true God; of which number, to be sure, were Jezebel and the prophets of Baal. And there were some among them who were altogether for the God of Israel, and wholly rejected Baal; as God told Elijah, that "he had yet left in Israel seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal, and whose mouths had not kissed him." 1 Kings xix. 18.

But the rest of the people halted between two opinions. They saw that some were for one, and some for the other, and they did not know which to choose; and, as is commonly the case when difference of opinion prevails, there were many who had no religion at all; they were not settled in any thing; the different opinions prevalent in Israel distracted and confounded them. Many who professed to believe in the true God, were yet very cold and indifferent, and many were wavering and unsettled. They saw that the king and queen were for Baal; and Baal's party was the prevailing party; but their forefathers had been for the Lord; and they knew not which were right. Thus they halted between two opinions.

(2.) In this expostulation is implied the unreasonableness of their thus halting between two opinions. "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." Which implies that they ought to determine one way or the other.

2. We may observe their silence on this occasion: "And the people answered him not a word," as being convicted in their own consciences of the unreasonableness of their being for so long a time wavering and unresolved; they had nothing to reply in excuse for themselves.

Doctrine. *Unresolvedness in religion is very unreasonable.*

I. Prop. Many persons remain exceedingly undetermined with respect to religion. They are very much undetermined in themselves whether to embrace religion or to reject it. Many who are baptized, and make a profession of religion, and seem to be Christians, are yet in their own minds halting between two opinions: they never yet came fully to a conclusion whether to be Christians or not. They are taught the Christian religion in their childhood, and have the Bible, the word preached, and the means of grace all their days: yet continue, and grow up, and

many grow old, in an unresolvedness whether to embrace Christianity or not; and many continue unresolved as long as they live.

1. There are some persons who have never come to a settled determination in their own minds, whether or no there be any *truth* in religion. They hear of the things of religion from their childhood all their days; but never come to a conclusion in their own minds whether they be real or fabulous. Particularly, some have never come to any determination in their own minds, whether there be any such thing as *conversion*.—They hear much talk about it, and know that many pretend to be the subjects of it; but they are never resolved whether all be not merely designed hypocrisy and imposture.

Some never come to any determination whether the scriptures be the word of God, or whether they be the invention of men; and whether the story concerning Jesus Christ be any thing but a fable. They fear it is true, but sometimes very much doubt of it. Sometimes when they hear arguments for it they assent that it is true; but upon every little objection or temptation arising, they call it in question; and are always wavering, and never settled about it.

So it seems to have been with many of the Jews in Christ's time; they were always at a loss what to make of him, whether he were indeed the Christ, or whether he were Elias, or one of the old prophets, or a mere impostor. John x. 24, 25. "Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not." Some have never so much as come to a resolution in their own minds, whether there be a God or not. They know not that there is, and oftentimes very much doubt of it.

2. There are some who never have come to any determination in their own minds whether to embrace religion in the *practice* of it. Religion consists not merely, or chiefly in theory or speculation, but in practice. It is a practical thing; the end of it is to guide and influence us in our practice: and considered in this view, there are multitudes who never have come to a conclusion whether to embrace religion or not. It is probably pretty general for men to design to be religious some time or other before they die; for none intend to go to hell. But they still keep it at a distance; they put it off from time to time, and never come to any conclusion which determines them in their present practice. And some never so much as fix upon any time. They design to be religious some time before they die, but they know not when.

There are many who have always continued unresolved about the necessity of striving and being earnestly engaged for salvation. They flatter themselves that they may obtain salva-

tion, though they be not so earnestly engaged; though they mind the world and their worldly affairs more than their salvation. They are often told how necessary it is that they make haste and not delay, that they do whatever their hand findeth to do with their might; that a dull, slack way of seeking salvation, is never likely to be effectual. But of these things they are never thoroughly convinced. Some seem to resolve to be in earnest, and seem to set out with some engagedness of mind; but soon fail, because they have never been fully convinced of its necessity.

Many have never come to a determination what to choose for their portion. There are but two things which God offers to mankind for their portion: one is this world, with the pleasures and profits of sin, together with eternal misery ensuing: the other is heaven and eternal glory, with a life of self-denial and respect to all the commands of God. Many, as long as they live, come to no settled determination which of these to choose. They must have one or the other, they cannot have both; but they always remain in suspense, and never make their choice.

They would fain have heaven and this world too; they would have salvation, and the pleasures and profits of sin too. But considering heaven and the world, as God offers them, they will have neither. God offers heaven only with the self-denial and difficulty which are in the way to it; and they are not willing to have heaven on these conditions. God offers the world and the pleasures of sin to men not alone, but with eternal misery in connexion with them: and so neither are they willing to have the world. They would fain divide heaven from the holiness and self-denial which are the way to it, and from the holiness which reigns in it, and then they would be glad to have heaven. They would fain divide sin from hell, and then they would fully determine for ever to cleave to sin.

But God will not make such a division for them. They must have one or the other of these for their portion, as God offers; and therefore they never make any choice at all. Indeed they do practically and in effect choose sin and hell. But they do not come to any resolution in their *own minds* which they will have for their portion, whether heaven and holiness, or the world and hell: they are always wavering and halting between two opinions. Sometimes they seem to determine for the one, and sometimes for the other. When they meet with no difficulty or temptation, and can, as they say, do their duty without hurting themselves or much crossing their carnal inclinations, they seem to choose heaven and holiness. At other times, wherein they meet with difficulty in the way of duty, and great temptations of worldly profits or pleasures are laid before them, then they choose the world, and let heaven and holiness alone.—There are among us vast multitudes before whom these

two things have been set hundreds of times, who have never to this day come to a determination which to have.

So they have never yet determined which shall be their master, whether God or Mammon. There are but few who have undertaken the service of God, and are come to a resolution and preparedness of mind to serve God, and follow Christ at all times, and to whatever difficulties it may expose them. Yet, at the same time, neither are they determined that they will continue to serve Satan: they are afraid to draw up such a conclusion.—Thus many spend their lives without making their choice, though they do in the mean-time practically choose the service of Satan. These are the persons of whom the apostle James speaks in chap. i. 8. "The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

II. To continue thus undetermined and unresolved in the things of religion, is very unreasonable, and that upon the following accounts.

1. In the things of religion, we are to the highest degree interested. The truth or falsehood of the doctrines of religion concern us to the highest degree possible. It is no matter of indifference to us whether there be a God or not; or whether the scriptures be the word of God; or whether Christ be the Son of God; or whether there be any such thing as conversion. It makes an infinite difference to us, whether these things be so or not. Therefore we are under the greatest obligation in point of interest to resolve in our minds whether they be true or false. They who are undetermined whether there be any truth in religion, and are contented to be so, not inquiring, nor thoroughly using the means to be determined, act very unreasonably. They remain in doubt, whether there be any such thing as a heaven or hell; are quiet and easy to continue ignorant in this matter; are not engaged in their minds to come to a determination; do not search and inquire what arguments there are to prove any such things; nor diligently weigh and consider the force of them; but busy their minds about other things of infinitely less importance; and act as if they thought it did not much concern them whether there be a future and eternal state.

If they think that there is not, yet it is a matter of so great importance, that no wise man would rest until he had satisfied himself; because if there be such a future state as the scriptures assert, then we must have our part in it, either in a state of eternal rewards, or in a state of eternal punishment. So it is no matter of indifference to us, what we have for our portion, whether this world with hell, or a life of holiness and self-denial with heaven. These opposite portions relate, not merely to a few days in this world, but to eternity. It is infinite madness, therefore, not to come to a determination.

So it is no matter of indifference what master we serve, whether God or Mammon; or what interest we will pursue, whether our temporal or eternal interest; or which we prefer, the commands of God, or our pleasures, our ease, and convenience. We ought, therefore, to come to some determination which we will choose.

2. God hath made us reasonable creatures, and capable of rationally determining for ourselves. Doubtless God hath made man capable of discovering the truth in matters of religion, of coming to a good determination in these questions, whether the scriptures be the word of God, whether there be a future state, and the like. The resolution of these questions, which it so much concerns us to determine, is not above our capacities. God hath not set these things beyond the extent of our faculties.

God hath made us capable of making a wise choice for ourselves, as to the life we shall choose to lead. He hath given man so much understanding, as to make him capable of determining which is best; to lead a life of self-denial and enjoy eternal happiness, or to take our swing in sinful enjoyments, and burn in hell forever. The question is of no difficult determination. It is so far from being a matter too hard for our reason, that the reason of a child is sufficient to determine this matter. Therefore, men, in remaining undetermined in these matters, do not act as reasonable creatures, but make themselves like "the horse and the mule, which have no understanding," Psal. xxxii. 9.

3. God puts into our hands a happy opportunity to determine for ourselves. What better opportunity can a man desire to consult his own interest, than to have liberty to choose his own portion? God setteth life and death before us. Deut. xxx. 19. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed after thee may live." See also Ezek. xviii. 31, 32; and chap. xxxiii. 11. What better opportunity can we desire for securing to ourselves the greatest good, than to have eternal life and unchangeable happiness set before us, and offered to our choice? Therefore those who neglect coming to a resolution, act unreasonably, because they stand so much in their own light, and neglect so glorious an opportunity.

4. The things among which we are to make our choice are but few in number; there are but two portions set before us, one of which must be our portion; either life or death, either blessing or cursing; either a life of universal and persevering obedience with eternal glory, or a worldly, carnal, wicked life, with eternal misery. If there were many terms in the offer made us, many things of nearly an equal value, one of which we must choose, to remain long in suspense and undetermined

would be more excusable; there would be more reason for long deliberation before we should fix. But there are only two terms, there are but two states in another world, in one or the other of which we must be fixed to all eternity.

And there are but two states in this world, a state of sin, and a state of holiness; a natural state, and a converted state. There is but one way in which we can come to life, which renders the determination of reason much the easier. There are but two masters, to one of which we must be reputed the servants, Baal and Jehovah, God and Mammon: There are but two competitors for the possession of us, Christ and the devil.—There are but two paths, in one of which you are to travel, either in the strait and narrow way which leadeth unto life, or the broad way which leadeth unto destruction.

This shews the unreasonableness of those who live under light, and have the offers of the gospel made to them, and yet remain from year to year unfixed and undetermined, halting between two opinions.

5. God hath given us all needed helps to determine us. We have all needful helps to determine our understandings, as to the truth of the things of religion, as whether there be a God, whether the scriptures be the word of God, whether there be a future state, &c. We are not left in the dark as to these things, as the poor Heathens are, who are under great disadvantages to come to the knowledge of the truth, though they be not under an impossibility, for *they may haply feel after God and find him*, Acts xvii. 27. But we have a clear sunshine to guide us, we have a particular description of those things which are set up before us for truth, and have great opportunity to examine them. The scripture lies open before us, and all the doctrines of the gospel are particularly set forth, with the reasons on which their evidence is founded. We may search and try their force and sufficiency, as we please.

We have great helps to a wise and rational determination in our choice; to determine whether it be best for us to choose a life of sin or a life of holiness, the service of God or the service of Baal. We have very plainly set before us the advantages of both sides; the loss and gain are particularly stated. Christ hath dealt by us faithfully, and hath told us what we shall get, and what we shall lose, by being his followers. He hath also told us what we shall get, and what we shall lose by a life of sin. He hath not dealt by us deceitfully. He hath not pretended greater advantages in godliness than there really are, nor greater disadvantages or dangers in sin; John xiv. 2. "In my father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you."

He hath told us plainly that we must take up the cross daily and follow him; that we must hate father and mother,

and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, and our own life also, in order to become his disciples; and that we must cut off our right hands, and pluck out our right eyes, in order to enter into heaven. Thus we have a fair opportunity to count the costs on both sides, and are directed so to do; Luke xiv. 28.—How unreasonable therefore is it for men who have all these helps and advantages, to remain in suspense, and to come to no conclusion whether they will be Christians or Heathens, whether they will be for God or the devil; though they have lived under the preaching of the word and offers of the gospel for many years.

6. We have no reason to expect to be under better advantages to determine hereafter than we are now. We never shall have a clearer revelation of gospel truth; never shall have the advantages and disadvantages of both sides more plainly set before us, than they are already in the word of God; nor are we ever like to be under better advantages to know what will be best for us, and most for our interest. Those therefore who delay, gain nothing by their delays, but give Satan more opportunity to darken their minds, to deceive them, and lead them astray in their choice. Therefore their delay of coming to a resolution is unreasonable.

7. If they come not to a determination in this life, God will determine for them, and will appoint them their portion with the wicked. If sinners, by refusing to choose either life or death, either heaven or hell, could thereby avoid both, or if in this case the matter would remain undetermined, till they should determine it; the folly and unreasonableness of delaying a determination would not be so great. But that is not the case; if they go on halting between two opinions, God will determine for them, and that quickly; he will determine where their portion shall be, *viz.* among the unbelievers, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever. God will not wait upon them always, to see what they will choose; but he will put an issue to the matter by his unalterable sentence.—Therefore it becomes all, if they are afraid to have their lot assigned them in hell, to come soon to a determination.

8. Delay in this case is unreasonable, because those who delay know not how soon the opportunity of choosing for themselves will be past. This opportunity will last no longer than life; when once life is past, they will no more have the offer made them; the sentence will be past; the matter will be closed.

Those who delay their choice in this world, will be glad to choose afterwards; then they will not be at a loss which to choose; they will be able easily to determine. The judgments of sinners, after this life, are soon resolved, whether there be

any truth in religion or not; they can soon determine which is most eligible,—a life of obedience and self-denial, with heaven for a reward, or a life of irreligion and sin, with hell for a punishment. They no longer halt between two opinions; but it is too late, their opportunity is past. They would give all the world for another opportunity to choose; they would then soon come to a determination. But it will not be granted them.

APPLICATION.

I. Let this put every one upon examining himself, whether or no he have ever yet come to a full determination in the affair of religion.

First, Inquire whether you have yet come to a full determination with respect to the truth of the things of religion. Have you ever been fully convinced? Is it a question which has been answered and determined with you, whether there be a future state; or does it yet remain a question with you unresolved? Are you not yet to seek whether there be any future state, and whether or no the story about Jesus Christ be any more than a fable? Here I desire you to note two things.

1. If the main reason why you assent to the truth of religion be, that others believe so, and you have been so instructed from your childhood, you are of those with whom the truth of religion yet remains undetermined. Tradition and education will never fix and settle the mind in a satisfactory and effectual belief of the truth. Though men, taking religion upon trust, may seem to give a full assent to the truth of religion, and not to call it in question, yet such a faith will not stand a shock; a temptation easily overthrows it. The reason of man, in time of trial, will not rest on so poor an evidence.

There are multitudes who seem to grant the truth of religion, with whom the main foundation of their faith is the tradition of their fathers, or the profession of their neighbours; and it is to be feared, it is so with many who count themselves good Christians. But as to all such persons as never have seen any other evidence to satisfy them, either of the truth or falsehood of religion, they only halt between two opinions.—The same may be said of those who are unstable in their disposition with regard to Christ, or the things which he taught.

2. If you are fully come to a determination concerning the things of religion, that they are true, they will be of weight with you above all things in the world. If you be really convinced that these things are no fable, but reality, it is impossible but that you must be influenced by them above all things in the world; for these things are so great, and so infinitely exceed all temporal things, that it cannot be otherwise. He that really is

convinced, that there is a heaven and hell, and an eternal judgment; that the soul, as soon as parted from the body, appears before the judgment seat of God; and that the happiness and misery of a future state is as great as the scripture represents it; or that God is as holy, just, and jealous, as he hath declared concerning himself in his word; I say, he that is really convinced, and hath settled it with himself, that these things are certainly true, will be influenced by them above all things in the world. He will be more concerned by far how he shall escape eternal damnation, and have the favour of God and eternal life, than how he shall get the world, gratify the flesh, please his neighbours, get honour, or obtain any temporal advantage whatsoever. His main inquiry will not be, *what shall I eat, and what shall I drink*, &c. but he will *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*.

Examine yourselves therefore by this: Are not your hearts chiefly set upon the world and the things of it? Is it not more your concern, care, and endeavour, to further your outward interest, than to secure an interest in heaven? And is not this the very reason that you have never seen the reality of eternal things?

Secondly. Inquire whether you have ever yet come to a determination about religion with respect to the *practice* of it; whether you have chosen heaven with the way to it, *viz.* the way of obedience and self-denial, before this world and the ways of sin; whether you have determined upon it as most eligible, to devote yourselves to the service of God.—Here I shall mention three or four things, which are signs that men halt between two opinions in this matter.

1. To put off duty till hereafter. When persons love to keep their duty at a distance, engage not in it for the present, but think of engaging when they shall be under better conveniences for it;—when they are very good *intenders* concerning what they will do to-morrow, but very poor *performers* to-day; when they say, as Felix, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee"—it is a sign that they halt between two opinions, and have never as yet come to a full determination with respect to the practice of religion. Those that have once fully determined that religion is necessary and eligible, will not desire to put it off, but will make it their present and immediate business.

2. It is a sign of the same thing, when persons are strict and conscientious in some things, but not universal in their obedience; do some duties, but live in the omission of others; avoid some sins, but allow themselves in others; are conscientious with respect to the duties of worship, public and private, but not in their behaviour to their neighbours; are not just in their dealings, nor conscientious in paying their debts; nor do to

others as they would that they should do to them: but have crooked, perverse ways in their dealings among mankind.

The same may be said when they are just in their dealings and trade with men, but are not conscientious in other things; indulge sensual appetites, drink to excess, or allow themselves in wanton practices: Or are honest and temperate, but licentious in using their tongues, backbiting and reproaching their fellow men, 2 Tim. iii. 6, 7.

3. It is a sign that you halt between two opinions, if you sometimes are wont to be considerably engaged in religion, but at other times neglect it; sometimes forming a resolution to be in good earnest, then dropping it again; sometimes seeming to be really engaged in seeking salvation, and very earnest in religious duties; at other times, wholly taken up about the things of the world, while religion is neglected, and religious duties are omitted.

These things shew, that you are yet unsettled, have never yet come to a full determination concerning religion, but are halting between two opinions, and therefore are thus unstable in all your ways, and proceed thus by fits and starts in religion, James i. 6, 7, 8. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think, that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." If your determination were fixed in religion, you would be more steady in your practice.

4. It is a sign that you are halting between two opinions, if it be your manner to balk your duty whenever any notable difficulty comes in the way, considerably cross to your interest, or very inconsistent with your ease or convenience, or your temporal honour. Whatever zeal you may seem to have, whatever concern about the things of religion, and however strict you be in ordinary, you have never, if this be your manner, come to a full determination; have never fully made choice of religion and the benefits of it for your only portion; and at best have got no further than king Agrippa, who was *almost* persuaded to be a Christian, Acts xxvi. 28. You are in the state of the stony-ground hearers, you have no root in yourselves, and, like a tree without root, are easily blown down by every wind.

II. I shall conclude with an earnest exhortation to all, no longer to halt between two opinions, but immediately to come to a determination whether to be Christians or not. Let me insist upon it, that you now make a choice, whether you will have heaven, with a life of universal and persevering obedience for your portion; or hell, with a life spent in the pursuit of this world. Consider those things which have been said, shewing the unreasonableness of continuing in such irresolution about an

affair of infinite importance to you, and as to which you have so short an opportunity to make your choice. Consider two things in addition to what hath been already said.

1. Those who live under the gospel, and thus continue undetermined about religion, are more abominable to God than the heathen. He hates those persons who continue from year to year, under the calls, and warnings, and instructions, and entreaties of God's word; who yet can be brought to nothing; who will come to no determination at all; will neither be Christians nor heathens. These are they who are spoken of in Rev. iii. 15, 16. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold, nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth."—And Ezek. xx. 39. "As for you, O house Israel, thus saith the Lord God, Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter, also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols."—These are (2 Tim. iii. 7,) "Ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth."

2. If you still refuse to come to a determination whether to be Christians or not, how just will it be, if God shall give you no further opportunity! If you refuse to make any choice at all—after all that hath been done to bring you to it, in setting life and death so often before you, in calling and warning you, how just will it be, if God shall wait no longer upon you; but shall, by his unalterable sentence, determine the case himself, and fix your state with the unbelievers, and teach you the truth and eligibleness of religion, by sad and fatal experience, when it will be too late for you to choose your portion.

SERMON III.*

UNBELIEVERS CONTEMN THE GLORY AND EXCELLENCY OF CHRIST.

Acts iv. 11.

This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders.

In the foregoing chapters we have an account of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the apostles, and of its extraordinary effects in their speaking boldly in the name of Jesus, and speaking many strange languages, and so being made the instruments of the sudden conversion of vast multitudes. And in the chapter immediately preceding, there is an account how Peter and John miraculously healed a man who had been a cripple from his birth; which, together with the word which they spake to the people that flocked together on the occasion, was the means of a new accession to the church: so that the number of them that heard the word and believed, as we are told in the fourth verse of this chapter, was about five thousand.

This sudden and extraordinary progress of the gospel greatly alarmed the priests and scribes, and other chief men among the Jews; so that they laid hands on Peter and John, and put them in hold, and the next day brought them forth to appear before them, and called them to an account for what they had done. They asked them particularly by what power or by what name, they had wrought the miracle on the impotent man. Upon which Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, makes answer, "Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner." The apostle quotes to them as now fulfilled, the 118th Psalm, ver. 22. "The stone which the builders refused is

* Dated, May 1736.

become the head stone of the corner." This text, in that Psalm, the apostle applies by telling them,

1. That, *This is the stone*, i. e. this person of whom he had spoken in the foregoing verse, *viz.* Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, and whom God had raised from the dead.

2. That they were the *builders* spoken of. They before whom the apostle then was, and to whom he was speaking, were rulers, and elders, and scribes of the people, the high priest and other priests. They, as they were set to be rulers and teachers among God's people, by their office, were called to be builders of the church of God.

3. That they set this stone *at nought*. They had so done by refusing to accept of him. Christ came to his own, and his own received him not: and not only so, but they had openly manifested the greatest contempt of him. They had mocked him, scourged and spit upon him, and in derision crowned him with a crown of thorns, and arrayed him in a mock robe, and then had put him to a most ignominious death.

4. That notwithstanding this, he was become the head of the corner. In spite of all that they could do, he had obtained the chief place in the building. God had made him the main foundation of it, by raising him from the dead, and so putting great honour upon him; by pouring out his Spirit, and enduing his disciples with extraordinary gifts; by suddenly converting so many thousands to be the followers of Christ. They put him to death, that he might have no followers, concluding that that would utterly put an end to his interest in Judea. But they were greatly disappointed: for the gospel had incomparably greater success after Christ's death than before. God had accomplished that very thing which they endeavoured to prevent by Christ's crucifixion, *viz.* Christ's being believed in and submitted to, as the great prophet of God, and prince of his people.

DOCTRINE.

Unbelievers set at nought the glory and excellency in Christ.

1. They set at nought the excellency of his person.—Christ is a great and glorious person, a person of infinite worthiness, on which account he is infinitely esteemed and loved of the Father, and is continually adored by the angels. But unbelievers have no esteem at all for him on that account. They have no value for him on account of his being the Son of God. He is not set the higher in their esteem on the account

of his standing in so near and honourable a relation to God the Father. He is not valued at all the more for his being a divine person. By his having the divine nature, he is infinitely exalted above all created beings. But he is not at all exalted by it in their esteem. They set nothing by his infinite majesty: his glorious brightness and greatness excite not any true respect or reverence in them.

Christ is the holy one of God: he is so holy that the heavens are not pure in his sight. He is possessed of all that holiness which is the infinite beauty and loveliness of the divine nature. But an unbeliever sets nothing by the holiness of Christ. Christ is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, 1 Cor. i. 24. But an unbeliever sets nothing by his power and wisdom. The Lord Jesus Christ is full of grace and mercy: the mercy and love of God appear no where else so brightly and gloriously as they do in the face of Jesus Christ. But an unbeliever sets no value at all upon the infinite grace of Christ.

Neither do unbelievers set any thing by those excellent virtues which appeared in Christ's human nature, when he was upon earth. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; he was meek and lowly of heart; he was patient under afflictions and injuries; when he was reviled, he reviled not again. But unbelievers set nothing by these things in Jesus Christ. They very often hear how excellent and glorious a person Christ is: they are told of his holiness, and grace, and condescension, and meekness, and have the excellencies of Christ plainly set forth to them; yet they set all at nought.

2. They set at nought his excellency in his work and office. They are told how glorious and complete a mediator he is; how sufficient to answer all our necessities, and to save sinners to the uttermost; but they make light of it all; yea, they make nothing of it. They hear of the wonderful wisdom of God in contriving such a way of salvation by Christ; they have the manifold wisdom of God set forth to them; but they make no account of the excellency of this way of salvation.

The unbeliever hears what a wonderful thing it was, that he who was in the form of God, and esteemed it no robbery to be equal with God, should take upon him the human nature, and come and live in this world in a mean and low condition; but he makes nothing of this. He hears much of the dying love of Christ to sinners, how wonderful it was that so glorious a person, who is infinitely above the angels, should so set his love on such worms of the dust, as to come and be made a curse for them, and die a cruel and ignominious death in their stead; but he sets nothing by all this. This dying love of Christ is of no account with him; those great things that Christ hath done and suffered, are with him light matters.

Unbelievers not only set *little* by the glory and excellency of Christ, but they set *nothing* by these things. Notwithstanding all the shews and pretences which many natural men make of respect to Christ, by speaking honourably of him in their prayers, and in their common conversation, and by coming to sacraments, and attending other ordinances of Christ; yet, indeed, they do not set so much by all the glory and excellency of Christ—either of his person or of his work as a Saviour—as they do by the smallest earthly enjoyment.

I proceed now to mention some *evidences* of the truth of this doctrine.

1. They never give Christ any *honour* on account of his glory and excellency. They may, and often do pay Christ an external and seeming respect; but they do not honour him in their hearts. They have no exalting thoughts of Christ, no inward respect or reverence towards him. All their outward worship is only feigned; none of it arises from any real honour or respect in their hearts towards Christ. It is either only for fashion's sake, and in compliance with custom, or else it is forced, and what they are driven to by fear, as we read, Psal. lxvi. 3. "Through the greatness of thy power, shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee." In the original, it is, *shall thine enemies lie unto thee;* i. e., yield a feigned obedience. Through the greatness of Christ's power, and for fear of his wrath, his enemies, who have no respect or honour for him in their hearts, will lie to him, and make a shew of respect when they have none.

An unbeliever is not sensible that Christ is worthy of any glory, and therefore does not at all seek the glory of Christ in any thing that he does; he does nothing in religion, out of respect to Christ's glory, but wholly for other ends; which shews that he sees not Christ to be worthy of any glory. Christ is set last and lowest in the heart of an unbeliever. He has high thoughts of other things; he has high thoughts of created objects and earthly enjoyments, but mean and low thoughts of Christ.

The unbeliever shews the mean and contemptible thoughts that he has of Christ, in refusing to accept of him, and in shutting the door of his heart against him. Christ stands at the door and knocks, and sometimes stands many years knocking at the door of his heart, but he refuses to open to him. Now it certainly shews, that men have a very mean thought of a person, when they shut him out of their doors. Unbelievers shew the mean and dishonourable thoughts they have of Christ, in that they dare not trust him. They believe not what he says to be true; they will not trust the word of Christ, so far as the word of one of their honest neighbours, or of a servant whom they have found to be faithful. It also appears that they have no real honour for Christ in their hearts, in that they refuse to obey

his commands. They do nothing from a spirit of obedience to him: and that external obedience which they render is but a forced, feigned obedience, and not from any respect to Christ's authority or worthiness to be obeyed.

2. They have no *love* to him on account of his glory and excellency. If they saw any excellency in Christ, they would have some measure of love to him. But the truth is, they see no form or comeliness in Christ, and hence they have no love at all to him. An unbeliever never exercises one act of true love to Christ. All that he is told of his divine perfections, of his holiness, his meekness, and grace, has no influence at all to draw forth any love. The display of these things doth no more draw forth love out of the heart of an unbeliever, than it draws forth love from the stones and rocks.

A natural man hath no love of benevolence towards Christ. Notwithstanding all that is declared to him of the excellency of Christ, he has no good-will towards him. He rejoices not in his glory and happiness; he would not care what became of Christ, if he could but escape hell. If Christ should be dethroned, or should cease to be, he has not so much good-will to Christ, as would make him concerned about it. And if the kingdom and interest of Christ in the world should go to ruin, it would be nowise grievous to the unbeliever, provided his own interest could be secure.

So also an unbeliever has no love of complacency in Jesus Christ for his excellency. He takes no delight in the consideration of that excellency of Christ of which he is told.—He is told that it is exceedingly beautiful and glorious; but the thoughts of the glory of Christ are nowise entertaining to him: he has no delight in the thoughts of it, or in any contemplations upon it. He takes delight in thinking of earthly objects; but when he comes to turn his mind upon Jesus Christ, if ever he so does, this is to him a dry and barren subject: he finds nothing there to feed and delight his soul; no beauty or loveliness to please or gratify him.

3. Unbelievers have no *desires* after the enjoyment of Christ. If they did set any thing by the excellency of Christ they would have some desires after him on account of that excellency; especially when he is offered to them, and is from time to time set forth as the proper object of their choice and desires. That which men prize, they are wont to desire, especially if it be represented to them as attainable, and as fit and suitable for them. But unbelievers only desire to be delivered from hell, but not to enjoy Christ.

They cannot conceive what happiness there can be in beholding Christ and being with him, in seeing his holiness, and contemplating his wonderful grace and divine glory. They have no relish for any such thing, nor appetite after it.

4. They shew that they set at nought the glory and excellency of Christ, in that they seek not a conformity to that glory and excellency. A natural man may seek to be holy, but it is not for holiness' sake, it is only that he may escape wrath. He has no desires after holiness, nor is it indeed holiness that he seeks, because he is all the while an enemy to holiness. A natural man has no desires to have his soul conformed to the glorious beauty and excellency of Christ, nor to have his image upon him.

If he prized, or delighted in the excellencies of Christ, he would necessarily desire to be like him so far as he could. This we see in ourselves and in all men: when we see any qualifications in others that are pleasing to us, it is natural for us to endeavour to imitate, and to be conformed to those persons.—Hence men are apt to learn of those for whom they have a great esteem: they naturally fall into an imitation of their ways and manner of behaviour. But natural men feel within themselves no disposition or inclination to learn of Christ or to imitate him. Their tempers and dispositions remain quite contrary to Christ's, neither do they grow at all better or more conformed to him, but rather worse. 2 Tim. iii. 13. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse."

APPLICATION.

1. This doctrine may teach us the heinousness of the sin of *unbelief*, as this sin sets all the glory and excellency of Christ at nought. It often appears strange to natural men, that unbelief should be spoken of as such a heinous and crying sin. They cannot see such evil in it. There are other sins which often trouble their consciences, when this troubles them not at all, though it be that which brings far greater guilt upon them, than those sins about which they are more troubled.

What has been said may shew why unbelief is spoken of as a heinous sin, John iii. 18. and ch. xvi. 9. and 1 John v. 10. For thereby all the glory of Christ is set at nought, though it be so great, though it be infinite, though it be the glory of the Godhead itself, and though it has been so gloriously manifested in what Christ has done and suffered. Natural men in their unbelief cast contempt on all this glory, and tread it under foot, as being nothing worth. Their unbelief treats the excellency of Christ as being of less value than the meanest earthly enjoyments.

II. This doctrine may convict natural men in four particulars.

1. Hereby you may be convinced of the greatness of your guilt. Consider how great and excellent that Person is, whom

you thus set at nought. Contempt of any person is heinous in proportion to the worthiness and dignity of the person contemned. Though we are but worms of the dust, and very vile sinful creatures; yet we take it grievously when we are despised. Consider how you yourselves are ready to resent it, when any of your neighbours seem to slight you, and set light by what you say and do, and to make no account of it but to treat you as if you were good for nothing, or not worth minding. Do you take this well of your neighbours and equals, when you observe any thing of this nature? Are you not ready to look upon it with resentment, to think very ill of it, and to judge that you have great cause to be offended?

But if it be such a crime to despise you and set you at nought, what is it to set at nought the eternal infinitely glorious Son of God, in comparison with whom you and all nations are nothing and less than nothing, and vanity? You dislike it much to be contemned by your equals; but you would take it yet more grievously to be despised by your inferiors, by those whom, on every account you must excel.—What a crime is it then for a vile, sinful worm, to set at nought him who is the brightness of the glory of the King of kings!

It would be a crime inexpressibly heinous, to set little by the glory and excellency of such a person; but it is more so, to set nothing at all by it, as you do. You have no value at all for it, as has been shown. And this is the more aggravated, as Christ is a person whom you so much need, and as he came into the world out of infinite grace to sinners, to lay down his life to deliver them from hell, and purchase for them eternal glory. How much has Christ done and suffered, that you might have opportunity to be saved! Yet you set nothing by the blood of Christ, even that blood which was shed for such poor sinners as you are, and that is offered to you for your salvation. But you trample under foot the blood of the Son of God. If Christ had come into the world only to teach us, it would have been a heinous thing to trample under foot his word and instructions. But when he came to die for us, how much more heinous is it to trample under foot his blood!

Men take it hardly to have any of their qualifications or actions despised, which they esteem commendable. But especially do they highly resent it when others slight their kindness. And above all when they put themselves out of their way, and have denied themselves, and suffered considerably to do others a kindness; then to have their kindness despised and set at nought, is what men would above all things resent. How heinous then is it, and how exceedingly provoking to God must it be, thus to set at nought so great kindness and love of Christ, when from love to sinners he suffered so much?

Consider how highly the angels, who are so much above you, do set by the glory and excellency of Christ. They admire and adore the glory of Christ, and cease not day nor night to praise the same in the most exalted strains. Rev. v. 11, 12. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." The saints admire the excellency of Christ, and the glorious angels admire it, and every creature in heaven and earth, but only you unbelieving children of men.

Consider not only how much the angels set by the glory of Christ, but how much God himself sets by it: for he is the darling of heaven, he was eternally God's delight; and because of his glory God hath thought him worthy to be appointed the heir of all things, and hath seen fit to ordain that all men *should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.*—Is he thus worthy of the infinite esteem and love of God himself? and is he worthy of no esteem from you?

2. Hereby you may be convinced of your danger. You must needs think that such guilt will bring great wrath. Dreadful destruction is denounced in scripture against those that despise only the disciples of Christ, Matt. xviii. 6. What destruction then will come on them that despise all the glorious excellency of Christ himself?

Consider that you not only have no value for all the glory and excellency of Christ; but you are enemies to him on that very account. The very ground of that enmity and opposition which there is between your hearts and Jesus Christ, is the glorious perfections and excellencies that there are in Jesus Christ. By being such an holy and excellent Saviour, he is contrary to your lusts and corruptions. If there were a Saviour offered to you that was agreeable to your corrupt nature, such a Saviour you would accept. But Christ being a Saviour of such purity, holiness and divine perfection, this is the cause why you have no inclination to him, but are offended in him.

Instead of being a precious stone in your eyes, he is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to you. That he is a Saviour who hath manifested such divine perfections in what he hath done and suffered, is one principal reason why you set nothing by him. Consider how provoking this must needs be to God the Father, who has given his only begotten Son for your salvation; and what wrath it merits from the Son whom you thus treat. And consider how you will hereafter bear this wrath.

Consider that, however Christ be set at nought by you, he shall be the head of the corner. Though you set him low, yet he shall be exalted even with respect to you. It is but a vain thing for you to make light of Christ and treat him with contempt. How much soever you contemn him, you cannot break his bands asunder, nor cast his cords from you. You will still be in his hands. While you despise Christ, God will despise you, and the Lord will have you in derision. God will set his King on his holy hill of Zion in spite of all his enemies; Psalm ii. 1—6. Though you say, We will not have this man to reign over us, yet Christ will rule over you; Psalm cx. 2., "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." If you will not submit to the sceptre of his grace, you shall be subject to the rod of his wrath, and he will rule you with a rod of iron; Psalm ii. 9—12.

3. You may hence be led to see how worthless many of those things in yourselves are, that you have been ready to make much of. Particularly, if you set nothing by all the glory of Christ, what are those desires that you have after Christ good for? and that willingness that you think you find to come to Christ? Sinners are often wont to excuse themselves in their unbelief, because they see not but that they are willing to come to Christ, and would gladly come to him if they could. And they make much of such desires, as though God were unjust to punish them for not coming to Christ, when they would gladly come if they could. But this doctrine shows that your willingness and desires to come to Christ are not worthy to be mentioned as any excuse; for they are not from any respect to Christ, but are merely forced; you at the same time set nothing by all his excellency and glory.

So you may hence learn the worthlessness of all your pains and endeavours after Christ. When sinners have taken a great deal of pains to get an interest in Christ, they are wont to make a righteousness of it; little considering that at the very time they are taking so much pains, they set nothing at all by Christ for any glory or excellency there is in him; but set him wholly at nought, and seek him out of respect to their own interest.

4. Hence learn how justly God might for ever refuse to give you an interest in Christ. For why should God give you any part or interest in him whom you set at nought, all whose glory and excellency you value not in the least, but rather trample it under your feet.

Why should God give you any interest in him whom you so despise? Seeing you despise him, how justly might you be obliged to go without any interest in him! How justly might you be refused any part in that precious stone, whose preciousness you esteem no more than that of the stones of the street!

Is God obliged to cast such a pearl before swine who will trample it under their feet? Is God obliged to make you possessors of his infinitely glorious and dear Son, when at the same time you count him not worth the having, for the sake of any worth or excellency that there is in him; but merely because you cannot escape hell without him?

SERMON IV.*

THE FOLLY OF LOOKING BACK IN FLEEING OUT OF SODOM.

LUKE XVII. 32.

Remember Lot's Wife.

CHRIST here foretels his coming in his kingdom, in answer to the question which the Pharisees asked him, viz. *When the kingdom of God should come.* And in what he says of his coming, he evidently has respect to two things; his coming at the destruction of Jerusalem, and his coming at the end of the world. He compares his coming at those times to the coming of God in two remarkable judgments that were past; first, to that in the time of the flood; "and as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man." Next he compares it to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; "likewise also, as it was in the days of Lot, even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed."

Then he immediately proceeds to direct his people how they should behave themselves at the appearance of the signal of that day's approaching, referring especially to the destruction of Jerusalem. "In that day, he which shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back." In which words Christ shows that they should make the utmost haste to flee and get out of the city to the mountains, as he commands, Matt. xxiv. 15, &c.—"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place; then let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains; let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of the house, neither let him which is in the field turn back to take his clothes."

Jerusalem was like Sodom, in that it was devoted to destruction, by special divine wrath; and indeed to a more terrible destruction than that of Sodom. Therefore the like

* Dated May, 1735.

direction is given concerning fleeing out of it with the utmost haste, without looking behind, as the angel gave to Lot, when he bid him flee out of Sodom, Gen. xix. 17. "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain." And in the text Christ enforces his counsel by the instance of Lot's wife. He bids them remember her, and take warning by her, who looked back as she was fleeing out of Sodom, and became a pillar of salt.

If it be inquired why Christ gave this direction to his people to flee out of Jerusalem, in such exceeding haste, at the first notice of the signal of her approaching destruction; I answer, it seems to be, because fleeing out of Jerusalem was a type of fleeing out of a state of sin. Escaping out of that unbelieving city typified an escape out of a state of unbelief. Therefore they were directed to flee without staying to take any thing out of their houses, to signify with what haste and concern we should flee out of a natural condition, that no respect to any worldly enjoyment should prevent us one moment, and that we should flee to Jesus Christ, the refuge of souls, our strong rock, and the mount of our defence, so as, in fleeing to him, to leave and forsake heartily all earthly things.

This seems to be the chief reason also why Lot was directed to make such haste, and not to look behind; because his fleeing out of Sodom was designed on purpose to be a type of our fleeing from that state of sin and misery in which we naturally are.

DOCTRINE.

We ought not to look back when we are fleeing out of Sodom. The following reasons may be sufficient to support this doctrine:

1. That Sodom is a city full of filthiness and abominations. It is full of those impurities that ought to be had in the utmost abhorrence and detestation by all. The inhabitants of it are a polluted company, they are all under the power and dominion of hateful lusts. All their faculties and affections are polluted with those vile dispositions that are unworthy of the human nature, that greatly debase it, that are exceedingly hateful to God, and that dreadfully incense his anger. Every kind of spiritual abomination abounds in it. There is nothing so hateful and abominable but that there it is to be found, and there it abounds.

Sodom is a city full of devils and all unclean spirits: there they have their rendezvous, and there they have their dominion. There they sport, and wallow in filthiness, as it is said of mystical Babylon. Rev. xviii. 2. Babylon is become the habitation of

devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Who would be of such a society? who would not flee from such a city with the utmost haste, and never look back upon it, and never have the least inclination of returning?

Some in Sodom may seem to carry a fair face, and make a fair outward show; but if we could look into their hearts, they are every one altogether filthy and abominable. We ought to flee from such a city, with the utmost abhorrence of the place and society, with no desires to dwell longer there, and never to discover the least inclination to return to it; but should be desirous to get to the greatest possible distance from it, that we might in nowise be partakers in her abominations.

2. We ought not to look back when fleeing out of Sodom, because Sodom is a city appointed to destruction. The cry of the city hath reached up to heaven. The earth cannot bear such a burden as her inhabitants are; she will, therefore, disburden herself of them, and spew them out. God will not suffer such a city to stand; he will consume it. God is holy, and his nature is infinitely opposite to all such uncleanness; he will, therefore, be a consuming fire to it. The holiness of God will not suffer it to stand, and the majesty and justice of God require that the inhabitants of that city who thus offend and provoke him, be destroyed. And God will surely destroy them; it is the immutable and irreversible decree of God. He hath said it, and he will do it. The decree is gone forth, and so sure as there is a God, and he is Almighty, and able to fulfil his decrees and threatenings, so surely will he destroy Sodom. Gen. xix. 12, 13. "Whatsoever thou hast in this city, bring them out of this place; for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." And in ver. 14—"Up, get ye out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city."

This city is an accursed city; it is destined to ruin. Therefore, as we would not be partakers of her curse, and would not be destroyed, we should flee out of it, and not look behind us, Rev. xviii. 4. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

3. We ought not to look back when fleeing out of Sodom, because the destruction to which it is appointed is exceedingly dreadful: it is appointed to utter destruction, to be wholly and entirely consumed. It is appointed to suffer the wrath of the great God, which is to be poured down from God upon it, like a dreadful storm of fire and brimstone. This city is to be filled full of the wrath of God. Every one that remains in it shall have the fire of God's wrath come down on his head, and into his soul: he shall be full of fire, and full of the wrath of the Almighty. He shall be encompassed with fire without, and full

of fire within: his head, his heart, his bowels, and all his limbs shall be full of fire, and not a drop of water to cool him.

Nor shall he have any place to flee to for relief. Go where he will, there is the fire of God's wrath: his destruction and torment will be inevitable. He shall be destroyed without any pity. He shall cry aloud, but there shall be none to help, there shall be none to regard his lamentations, or to afford relief. The decree is gone forth, and the days come when Sodom shall burn as an oven, and all the inhabitants thereof shall be as stubble. As it was in the literal Sodom, the whole city was full of fire: in their houses there was no safety, for they were all on fire; and if they fled out into the streets, they also were full of fire. Fire continually came down out of heaven every where—That was a dismal time. What a cry was there then in that city, in every part of it! But there was none to help; they had no where to go, where they could hide their heads from fire: they had none to pity or relieve them. If they fled to their friends, they could not help them.

Now with what haste should we flee from a city appointed to such a destruction! and how should we flee without looking behind us! how should it be our whole intent, to get at the greatest distance from a city in such circumstances! how far should we be from thinking at all of returning to a city which has such wrath hanging over it!

4. The destruction to which Sodom is appointed, is an universal destruction. None that stay in it shall escape: none will have the good fortune to be in any by-corner, where the fire will not search them out. All sorts, old and young, great and small, shall be destroyed. There shall be no exception of any age, or any sex, or any condition, but all shall perish together. Gen. xix. 24, 25. "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, and he overthrew those cities and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." We, therefore, must not delay or look behind us; for there is no place of safety in Sodom, nor in all the plain on which Sodom is built. The mountain of safety is before us, and not behind us.

5. The destruction to which Sodom is appointed, is an everlasting destruction. This is said of the literal Sodom, that it suffered the vengeance of eternal fire; Jude vii. "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." The destruction that Sodom and Gomorrah suffered, was an eternal destruction: those cities were destroyed, and have never been built since, and are not capable of being rebuilt; for the land on which they stood at the time of their

destruction, sunk, and has been ever since covered with the lake of Sodom, or the Dead Sea, or, as it is called in Scripture, *the Salt Sea*. This seems to have been thus ordered on purpose to be a type of the eternal destruction of ungodly men. So that fire by which they were destroyed, is called *eternal fire*, because it was so typically; it was a type of the eternal destruction of ungodly men; which may be in part what is intended, when it is said in that text in Jude, that they were set forth for an example, or for a type or representation of the eternal fire in which all the ungodly are to be consumed.

Sodom has in all ages since been covered with a lake which was first brought on it by fire and brimstone, to be a type of the lake of fire and brimstone in which ungodly men shall have their part for ever and ever, as we read Rev. xx. 15., and elsewhere.—We ought not therefore to look back when fleeing out of Sodom, seeing that the destruction to which it is appointed is an eternal destruction; for this renders the destruction infinitely dreadful.

6. Sodom is a city appointed to swift and sudden destruction. The destruction is not only certain and inevitable, and infinitely dreadful, but it will come speedily. "Their judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not;" 2 Pet. ii. 3. And so Deut. xxxii. 35., "The day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste." The storm of wrath, the black clouds of divine vengeance even now every moment hang over them, just ready to break forth and come down in a dreadful manner upon them. God hath already whet his sword and bent his bow, and made ready his arrow on the string, Psalm vii. 12. Therefore we should make haste, and not look behind us. For if we linger and stop to look back, and flee not for our lives, there is great danger that we shall be involved in the common ruin.

The destruction of Sodom is not only swift, but will come suddenly and unexpectedly. It seems to have been a fair morning in Sodom before it was destroyed. Gen. xix. 23. It seems that there were no clouds to be seen, no appearance of any storm at all, much less of a storm of fire and brimstone. The inhabitants of Sodom expected no such thing; even when Lot told his sons-in-law of it, they would not believe it; Gen. xix. 14.—They were making merry; their hearts were at ease, they thought nothing of such a calamity at hand. But it came at once, as travail upon a woman with child, and there was no escaping; as ver. 28, 29., "They did eat, they drank; they bought, they sold; they planted, they builded: but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all."

So it is with wicked men; Psalm lxxiii. 19., "How are they brought into desolation in a moment: they are utterly

consumed with terrors."—If, therefore, we linger and look back, we may be suddenly overtaken and seized with destruction.

7. There is nothing in Sodom that is worth looking back upon. All the enjoyments of Sodom will soon perish in the common destruction; all will be burnt up. And surely it is not worth the while to look back on things that are perishing and consuming in the flames, as it is with all the enjoyments of sin; they are all appointed to the fire. Therefore it is foolish for any who are fleeing out of Sodom to hanker any more after them; for when they are burnt up, what good can they do? And is it worth the while for us to return back for the sake of a moment's enjoyment of them, before they are burnt, and so expose ourselves to be burnt up with them?

Lot's wife looked back, because she remembered the pleasant things that she left in Sodom. She hankered after them; she could not but look back with a wishful eye upon the city, where she had lived in such ease and pleasure. Sodom was a place of great outward plenty; they ate the fat, and drank the sweet. The soil about Sodom was exceedingly fruitful; it is said to be as *the garden of God*, Gen. xii. 10. And *fulness of bread* was one of the sins of the place, Ezek. xvi. 49.

Here Lot and his wife lived plentifully; and it was a place where the inhabitants wallowed in carnal pleasures and delights. But however much it abounded in these things, what were they worth now, when the city was burning? Lot's wife was very foolish in lingering in her escape, for the sake of things which were all on fire. So the enjoyments, the profits, and pleasures of sin, have the wrath and curse of God on them: brimstone is scattered on them: hell-fire is ready to kindle on them. It is not therefore worth while for any person to look back after such things.

8. We are warned by messengers sent to us from God, to make haste in our flight from Sodom, and not to look behind us. God sends to us his ministers, the angels of the churches, on this grand errand, as he sent the angels to warn Lot and his wife to flee for their lives, Gen. xix. 15, 16. If we delay or look back, now that we have had such fair warning, we shall be exceedingly inexcusable and monstrously foolish.

APPLICATION.

The use that I would make of this doctrine is, to *warn* those who are in a natural condition to flee out of it, and by no means to look back. While you are out of Christ, you are in Sodom. The whole history of the destruction of Sodom, with all its circumstances, seems to be inserted in the scriptures for

our warning, and is set forth for an example, as the apostle Jude says. It, in a lively manner, typifies the case of natural men, the destruction of those that continue in a natural state, and the manner of their escape who flee to Christ. The Psalmist, when speaking of the appointed punishment of ungodly men, seems evidently to refer to the destruction of Sodom, Psalm xi. 6. "Upon the wicked, God shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."

Consider, therefore, you that are seeking an interest in Christ, you are to flee out of Sodom. Sodom is the place of your nativity, and the place where you have spent your lives. You are citizens of that city which is full of filthiness and abomination before God, that polluted and accursed city. You belong to that impure society. You not only live among them, but you are of them, you have committed those abominations, and have so provoked God as you have heard. It is you that I have all this while been speaking of under this doctrine; you are the inhabitants of Sodom. Perhaps you may look on your circumstances as not very dreadful; but you dwell in Sodom. Though you may be reformed, and appear with a clean outside, and a smooth face to the world; yet, as long as you are in a natural condition, you are impure inhabitants of Sodom.

The world of mankind is divided into two companies, or, as I may say, into two cities: there is the city of Zion, the church of God, the holy and beloved city; and there is Sodom, that polluted and accursed city, which is appointed to destruction. You belong to the latter of these. How much soever you may look upon yourselves as better than some others, you are of the same city; the same company with fornicators, and drunkards, and adulterers, and common swearers, and highwaymen, and pirates, and Sodomites. How much soever you may think yourselves distinguished, as long as you are out of Christ you belong to the very same society; you are of the company, you join with them, and are no better than they, any otherwise than as you have greater restraints. You are considered in the sight of God as fit to be ranked with them. You and they are altogether the objects of loathing and abhorrence, and have the wrath of God abiding on you: you will go with them and be destroyed with them, if you do not escape from your present state. Yea, you are of the same society and the same company with the devils, for Sodom is not only the city of wicked men, but it is the hold of every foul spirit.

You belong to that city which is appointed to an awful, inevitable, universal, swift, and sudden destruction; a city that hath a storm of fire and wrath hanging over it. Many of you are convinced of the awful state you are in while in Sodom, and are making some attempts to escape from the wrath which hangs

over it. Let such be warned by what hath been said, to escape for their lives, and not to look back. Look not back, unless you choose to have a share in the burning tempest that is coming down on that city. Look not back in remembrance of the enjoyments which you have had in Sodom, as hankering after the pleasant things which you have had there, after the ease, the security, and the pleasure which you have there enjoyed.

Remember Lot's wife, for she looked back, as being loth utterly and for ever to leave the ease, the pleasure and plenty which she enjoyed in Sodom, and as having a mind to return to them again: remember what became of her.—Remember the children of Israel in the wilderness, who were desirous of going back again into Egypt. Numb. xi. 5. "We remember the flesh which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks and onions, and the garlick." Remember what was the issue. You must be willing for ever to leave all the ease, and pleasure, and profit of sin, to forsake all for salvation, as Lot forsook all, and left all he had, to escape out of Sodom.

SERMON V.

THE FOLLY OF LOOKING BACK IN FLEEING OUT OF SODOM.

LUKE XVII. 32.

Remember Lot's Wife.

THE *doctrine* from these words was, That *we ought not to look back when we are fleeing out of Sodom.*—Having confirmed this doctrine by several reasons, we came to the application of it in a use of warning to sinners in a natural state, and especially to those who are awakened and convinced of the awful state in which they are, and are desirous of escaping the wrath which is to come. And further to enforce this warning, let me entreat all you who are in this state, to consider the several things which I shall now mention:

1. The destruction of which you are in danger is infinitely more dreadful than that destruction of the literal Sodom from which Lot fled. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in a storm of fire and brimstone, was but a shadow of the destruction of ungodly men in hell, and is no more to it than a shadow or a picture is to a reality, or than painted fire is to real fire.—The misery of hell is set forth by various shadows and images in scripture, as blackness of darkness, a never-dying worm, a furnace of fire, a lake of fire and brimstone, the torments of the valley of the son of Hinnom, a storm of fire and brimstone.—The reason why so many similitudes are used, is because none of them are sufficient. Any one does but partly and very imperfectly represent the truth, and therefore God makes use of many.

You have therefore much more need to make haste in your escape, and not to look behind you, than Lot and his wife had when they fled out of Sodom; for you are every day and every moment in danger of a thousand times more dreadful storm coming on your heads, than that which came on Sodom, when the Lord rained brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven upon them; so that it will be vastly more sottish in you to look back than it was in Lot's wife.

2. The destruction of which you are in danger is not only greater than the temporal destruction of Sodom, but greater than the eternal destruction of the inhabitants of Sodom. For however well you may think you have behaved yourselves, you who have continued impenitent under the glorious gospel, have sinned more, and provoked God far more, and have greater guilt upon you, than the inhabitants of Sodom; although you may seem to yourselves, and perhaps to others, to be very harmless creatures; Matt. x. 15., "Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city."

3. Multitudes, while they have been looking back, have been suddenly overtaken and seized by the storm of wrath. The wrath of God hath not delayed, while they have delayed; it has not waited at all for them to turn about and flee; but has presently seized them, and they have been past hope. When Lot's wife looked back, she was immediately destroyed, God had exercised patience towards her before. When she lingered at the setting out, the angels pressed her, and her husband and children, to make haste. Not only so, but when they yet delayed, they brought her forth, and set her without the city, the Lord being merciful to her. But now when, notwithstanding this mercy, and the warnings which had been given her, she looked back, God exercised no more patience towards her, but proceeded immediately to put her to death.

Now God has in like manner been merciful to you. You in time past have been lingering; you have been warned by the angel of your danger, and pressed to make haste and flee; yet you have delayed. And now at length God hath as it were laid hold on you, by the convictions of his Spirit, to draw you out of Sodom; therefore *remember Lot's wife*. If now after all, you should look back, when God hath been so merciful to you, you will have reason to fear, that God will suddenly destroy you. Multitudes, when they have been looking back, and putting off to another time, have never had another opportunity; they have been suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.

4. If you look back, and live long after it, there will be great danger that you will never get any further. The only way to seek salvation is to press forward with all your might, and still to look and press forward, never to stand still or slacken your pace. When Lot's wife stopped in her flight, and stood still in order that she might look, her punishment was, that there she should stand for ever; she never got any further; she never got beyond that place: but there she stood as a pillar of salt, a durable pillar and monument of wrath, for her folly and wickedness.

So it is very often with backsliders, though they may live a considerable time after. When they look back, after they

have been taking pains for their salvation, they lose all, they put themselves under vast disadvantages; by quenching the Spirit of God, and losing their convictions, they dreadfully harden their own hearts, and stupify their souls. They make way for discouragements, dreadfully strengthen and establish the interest of sin in their hearts, many ways give Satan great advantages to ruin them, and provoke God oftentimes utterly to leave them to hardness of heart. When they come to look back, their souls presently become dead and hard like the body of Lot's wife. And though they live long after, they never get any further; it is worse for them than if they were immediately damned. When persons, in fleeing out of Sodom, look back, their last case is far worse than the first; Matt. xii. 43, 44, 45. And experience confirms, that none ordinarily are so hard to be brought to repentance as backsliders.

5. It may well stir you up to flee for your lives, and not to look behind you, when you consider how many have lately fled to the mountain, while you yet remain in Sodom. To what multitudes hath God given the wisdom to flee to Christ, the mountain of safety! They have fled to the little city Zoar, which God will spare, and never destroy. How many have you seen of all sorts resorting out of Sodom thither, as believing the word of God by the angels, that God would surely destroy that place. They are in a safe condition; they are got out of the reach of the storm; the fire and brimstone can do them no hurt there.

But you yet remain in that cursed city among that accursed company. You are yet in Sodom, which God is about so terribly to destroy, where you are in danger every minute of having snares, fire and brimstone, come down on your head.—Though so many have obtained, yet you have not obtained deliverance. Good has come, but you have seen none of it. Others are happy, but no man knows what will become of you: you have no part nor lot in that glorious salvation of souls, which has lately been among us. The consideration of this should stir you up effectually to escape, and, in your escape, to press forward—still to press forward—and to resolve to press forward for ever, let what will be in the way, to hearken to no temptation, and never to look back, or in any wise slacken or abate your endeavours as long as you live, but if possible to increase in them more and more.

6. Backsliding after such a time as this,* will have a vastly greater tendency to seal a man's damnation than at another time. The greater means men have, the louder calls, and the greater advantages they are under, the more dangerous is back-

* The time of the revival of religion at Northampton, A. D. 1735.

sliding, the more it has a tendency to enhance guilt, to provoke God, and to harden the heart.

We, in this land of light, have long enjoyed greater advantages than most of the world. But the advantages which persons are under now for their salvation, are perhaps tenfold what they have been at such times as we have ordinarily lived in; and backsliding will be proportionably the greater sin, and the more dangerous to the soul. You have seen God's glory and his wonders amongst us, in a most marvellous manner. If, therefore, you look back after this, there will be great danger that God will swear in his wrath, that you shall never enter into his rest; as God sware concerning them that were for going back into Egypt, after they had seen the wonders which God wrought for Israel. Numb. xiv. 22, 23. "Because all those men that have seen my glory and my miracles, that I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it." The wonders that we have seen among us of late, have been of a more glorious nature than those that the children of Israel saw in Egypt, and in the wilderness.

We know not but that great part of the wicked world are, at this day, in Sodom's circumstances, when Lot fled out of it; having some outward, temporal destruction hanging over it. It looks as if some great thing were coming; the state of things in the world seems to be ripe for some great revolution. The world has got to such a terrible degree of wickedness, that it is probable the cry of it has reached up to heaven; and it is hardly probable that God will suffer things to go on, as they now do, much longer. It is likely that God will, ere long, appear in awful majesty to vindicate his own cause; and then none will be safe that are out of Christ. Now, therefore, every one should flee for his life, and escape to the mountain, lest he be consumed. We cannot certainly tell what God is about to do, but this we may know, that those who are out of Christ, are in a most unsafe state.

8. To enforce this warning against looking back, let me beseech you to consider the exceeding proneness to it there is in the heart. The heart of man is a backsliding heart. There is in the heart a great love and hankering desire after the ease, pleasure, and enjoyments of Sodom, as there was in Lot's wife, by which persons are continually liable to temptations to look back. The heart is so much towards Sodom, that it is a difficult thing to keep the eye from turning that way, and the feet from tending thither. When men under convictions are put upon fleeing, it is a mere force, it is because God lays hold on

their hands, as he did on Lot's and his wife's, and drags them so far. But the tendency of the heart is to go back to Sodom.

Persons are very prone to backsliding also through discouragement. The heart is unsteady, soon tired, and apt to listen to discouraging temptations. A little difficulty and delay soon overcome its feeble resolutions. And discouragement tends to backsliding: it weakens persons' hands, lies as a dead weight on their hearts, and makes them drag heavily; and if it continue long, it very often issues in security and senselessness. Convictions are often shaken off that way: they begin first to go off with discouragement.

Backsliding is a disease that is exceeding secret in its way of working. It is a flattering distemper; it works like a consumption, wherein persons often flatter themselves that they are not worse, but something better, and in a hopeful way to recover, till a few days before they die. So backsliding commonly comes on gradually, and steals on men insensibly, and they still flatter themselves that they are not backslidden. They plead that they are seeking yet, and they hope they have not lost their convictions. And by the time they find it out, and cannot pretend so any longer, they are commonly so far gone, that they care not much if they have lost their convictions. And when it is come to that, it is commonly a gone case as to those convictions. Thus they blind themselves, and keep themselves insensible of their own disease, and so are not terrified with it, nor awakened to use means for relief, till it is past cure.

Thus it is that backsliding commonly comes upon persons that have for some time been under any considerable convictions, and afterwards lose them. Let the consideration of this your danger excite you to the greatest care and diligence to keep your hearts, and to watchfulness and constant prayer against backsliding. And let it put you upon endeavours to strengthen your resolutions of guarding against every thing that tends to the contrary, that you may indeed hold out to the end; for *then shall you know, if you follow on to know the Lord.*

SERMON VI.*

THE WARNINGS OF SCRIPTURE ARE IN THE BEST MANNER ADAPTED TO THE AWAKENING AND CONVERSION OF SINNERS.

LUKE XVI. 31.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

WE here have an account how the rich man in hell—after he had in vain begged of Abraham to send Lazarus to his relief —prays that Lazarus may be sent to his brethren to warn them, that they might take care for their salvation, and escape that place of torment. By the way, it may be proper to remark, that we cannot from this conclude, that the damned will have any workings of natural affection to their near relations in this world, or any concern for their salvation. The design of Christ was only parabolically to represent what different thoughts worldly and wicked men will have of things, when in hell, from what they have while upon earth. The rich man, when he was upon earth, only minded his honour, ease, and pleasure, and did not think it worth while to take care of his soul, and to be at much pains to escape hell. But now he is of another mind, and is sensible that if his five brethren, who live in the same careless neglect of their souls as he did, knew what hell is, they would take more care.

But this seems to be put into the parable chiefly to introduce what follows, the reply which Abraham made to him, *They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.* As much as to say, They have already abundant warning, and instruction, which God himself hath provided for them, let them make use of that.

The rich man replies, *Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.* Then come in the words of the text, *And he said unto him, If they hear not*

* Not dated.

Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. By Moses and the prophets is meant the whole Old Testament, which was the whole canon of scripture which they had in those times. The hearing of them implies, attending to what they say, believing them, and obeying them. *They would not be persuaded,* that is, they would not be persuaded to take thorough care of their souls, to forsake their sins and turn to God, so as to avoid this place of torments.—*Though one rose from the dead;* though one should go from the invisible world, either from heaven, where they see the torments of the damned, or from hell, where they feel them.

DOCTRINE.

The warnings of God's word are more fitted to obtain the ends of awakening sinners, and bringing them to repentance, than the rising of one from the dead to warn them.

In this passage, Moses and the prophets seem not only to be equalized to the warnings of one from the invisible world, but to be preferred before them. They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them: they have already those means which God in his infinite wisdom hath seen to be fittest for them, and more suitable to their nature and circumstances than the rising of one from the dead.—But whether there can be any more than an equality necessarily inferred or not; yet if only the warnings of the Old Testament have an equal tendency to bring men to repentance, as the rising of one from the dead; then surely these, together with the much clearer revelation under the gospel-dispensation by Christ and his apostles—wherein we are abundantly more plainly told of another world, and wherein life and immortality are brought to light—must have a much greater tendency and fitness to obtain these ends.

Sinners are apt to find fault with the means of grace which they enjoy, and to say with themselves, if I had ever seen hell, or had ever heard the cries of the damned, or had ever seen a person who had felt hell-torments, or had seen them at a distance, that would awaken me; then I would forsake all my sins, and would do whatever I could to escape hell. But now I am only told of hell in the Bible and by ministers; and there never was any in this world that saw or felt it: so that I am ready to think that it is mere delusion and fancy. How do I know that there is any hell? How do I know but that when I die, there will be an end of me?

But it is the indisposition of sinners to this great work, to which they are directed, which makes them find fault with their means and advantages. The slothful and negligent, who hate to bestir themselves, are they who object. "The way of the

slothful is as a hedge of thorns."—Sinners know not what they would have. They are fixedly averse to breaking off their sins by righteousness; and to make the matter the more excusable, they object against the sufficiency of their means, and so they will not believe, except they see hell, or see some person who has seen it.

But God, who knows our nature and circumstances, knows what is most adapted to them. He who made the faculties of our souls, knows what will have the greatest tendency to move them, and to work upon them. He who is striving with us, to bring us to repentance and salvation, uses the fittest and best means. In contriving and appointing the means of our salvation, he chooses better for us than we should for ourselves.

Suppose a person should rise from the dead to warn sinners, either from heaven, where they see the misery of the damned, or from hell, where they feel it; and should tell how dismal those torments are, having seen or felt them; and suppose he should confirm what he said, by declaring that he had seen the smoke of their torments, the raging of the flames, the dreadful crew of devils and damned souls together, and had heard their dismal cries and shrieks; or suppose he should say that he had felt them, and should express by words and actions the doleful state of the damned and the extremity of their torments; this would probably greatly fright and terrify many sinners who were not terrified by reading the Bible, nor by hearing preaching about hell-torments. But it would be very much because of the unusualness and strangeness of the thing. Men are apt to be much affected with strange things, and to be much affrighted by spectres in the dark, because they are unusual. But if they were as common as preaching is, they would lose their effect.

It might be that on such an unusual occasion, as the rising of one from the dead, for a while men would reform their lives, and possibly some might be so affected as never to forget it.—But we are to consider which would have the greatest tendency to awaken us, if both were alike new and unusual, to be warned of the misery of hell by the great God himself, declaring as it were from heaven how dreadful hell is, and abundantly warning us about it; or to be warned only by a man coming from the invisible world, who had either seen or felt these miseries. It is in this view that we shall consider the matter; and we shall shew what advantages the former mode of warning has above the latter: or how the warnings of God's word have a greater tendency to awaken sinners and bring them to repentance, than the rising of one from the dead to warn them.

1. God, in many respects, knows better what belongs to the punishment of sinners than departed souls. Departed souls doubtless know what hell torments are, much better than any on

earth. The souls of the wicked feel them, and the souls of the saints see them afar off. God glorifies his justice in the punishment of ungodly men, in the view of the saints and angels, and thereby makes them the more admire the riches of his goodness in choosing them to life. As the rich man saw Lazarus in heaven afar off, so Lazarus saw the rich man in hell; he saw hell-torments; and therefore the rich man desires he may be sent to warn his brethren. And if one should rise from the dead to warn wicked men, if it would at all awaken them, it would be because he knew what hell-torments were by his own knowledge, and could describe them to others, as having seen and felt him.

But surely the all-seeing God knows as well as any of the dead, what the present sufferings of the damned are. He is every where present with his all-seeing eye. He is in heaven and in hell, and in and through every part of the creation. He is where every devil is; and where every damned soul is, he is present by his knowledge and his essence. He not only knows as well as those in heaven, who see at a distance; but he knows as perfectly as those who feel the misery. He seeth into the innermost recesses of those miserable spirits. He seeth all the sorrow and anguish that are there; for he upholds them in being. They and all the powers of their spirits, whereby they are capable of either happiness or misery, are in his hands.

Besides, it is his wrath they endure; he measures out to them their several portions of punishment; he makes his wrath enter into them; he is a consuming fire to them; his anger is that fire, in which they are tormented. He therefore is doubtless able to give us as clear and distinct, and as true an account of hell, as the damned themselves, if they should rise from the dead. He needs not any to inform him.

He knows far better what the eternity of those torments is than any of them. He can better tell us how awful a thing eternity is. He knows better what the future judgment of sinners will be, when the Lord Jesus shall come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel. He knows far better than they how much the torment of the wicked will then be increased.

2. We have the truth upon surer grounds from God's testimony, than we could have it from the testimony of one rising from the dead. Suppose one should rise from the dead and tell us of the dreadfulness of hell torments; how precarious a foundation would that be to build upon, in a matter of such importance, unless we consider it as confirmed by divine testimony. We should be uncertain whether there were not some delusion in the case. We know that it is impossible for God to lie; and we may know that the matter is just as he declares it to us. But if one should come from the dead, we could not be

so sure that we were no way imposed upon. We could not be so sure that he who testified was not himself subject to some delusion. We could not be sure that the matter was not strained too high, and represented greater than it really is.

One coming from the dead could not, merely by force of his own testimony, make us sure that we should come to that place of torments if we did not repent and reform. And if there should come more witnesses than one from the dead, if there should be ever so many, yet there is no authority equal to that of God; there is no testimony of spirits from the invisible world which would be so indisputable and unquestionable as the divine testimony. How could we know, unless by some divine revelation, that they who should come from the dead had not come to deceive us? How could we know how wicked, or how good they were, and upon what views they acted?

Whereas we have the greatest ground to be assured, that the First Being, and the fountain of all being and perfection, is nothing but light and truth itself, and therefore that it is impossible he should deceive or be deceived.

3. The warnings of God's word have greatly the advantage, by reason of the greatness and majesty of him who speaks. The speeches and declarations of those who are great, excellent, and honourable, have a greater tendency to move the affections, than the declarations of others who are less excellent. Things spoken by a king affect more than the same things spoken by a mean man.

But God is infinitely greater than kings; he is universal King of heaven and earth, the absolute Sovereign of all things. Now, what can have a greater tendency to strike the mind and move the heart, than to be warned by this great and glorious Being? Shall we be unmoved when he speaks who made heaven and earth by the word of his power? If his immediate speeches, declarations, and warnings, will not influence us, what will? Isaiah i. 2. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken."—That is to the present purpose which we have in Matt. xxi. 37. "But last of all, he sent his Son, saying, They will reverence my Son." He sent his servants before, but they did not regard them. He therefore sent his Son, who was a much greater and more honourable messenger, and said, Surely they will regard him.

What if God should send messengers from the dead to warn us, even many in succession, and men should reject them; we should justly argue, that it would have a much greater tendency to make men regard and obey the counsel, if he would send his Son or come himself. But God hath sent his Son, and therein he hath come himself. He came down from heaven and took upon him our nature, and dwelt among us, teaching and warning us concerning hell and damnation.

In the Bible, we not only have those warnings which were given by inspiration of the prophets, but we have God's own words which he spake as it were by his own mouth. In the Old Testament is his voice out of the midst of the fire and the darkness, from Mount Sinai: and in the New Testament, we have God speaking to us, as dwelling among us. He came down from heaven, and instructed us in a familiar manner for a long while; and we have his instructions recorded in our Bibles.—Now, which has the greatest tendency to influence men, to have one of the departed spirits sent back into its body to warn them, or to have God himself assume a body and warn them?

4. It more evidently shows the importance of the affair, that God should immediately concern himself in it, than the coming of one from the dead would do. Those things about which kings most immediately concern themselves are commonly matters of the greatest importance, while they leave less concernments to be managed by their officers. And surely that must be a matter of very great moment, in which God shows himself so much concerned as he does in our salvation. God, in all ages of the world, hath showed himself very much concerned in this matter. How abundantly hath he warned us in his holy word! How earnest hath he shown himself in it! How many arguments and expostulations hath he used, that we might avoid the way to hell?—This evidently argues, that what we are warned about is a matter of the utmost concern, and proves it much more than if we were only warned by one risen from the dead.

5. God warning us of our danger of damnation, hath a greater tendency to have influence upon us, because he is our Judge. Damnation is a punishment to which he condemns and which he inflicts. What he warns us of is his own wrath and vengeance. In his word we have his threatenings against sin denounced by himself. He tells us, that if we go on in sin, he will destroy us, and cast us out of his sight, and pour out his wrath upon us, and hold us eternally under misery. He tells us so himself; and this hath a much greater tendency to influence us, than to be told so by another, who is not to be our judge, who hath not in his hands the power of making us miserable.—When a king immediately threatens his own displeasure, it has a greater tendency to terrify men, than when another man threatens it, or warns them of the danger.

6. God is infinitely wise, and knows better how to speak to us so as to persuade us, than one risen from the dead. He perfectly knows our nature and state, and knows how to adapt his instructions and warnings to our frame and circumstances in the world; and without doubt that method which God hath chosen, is agreeable to his infinite wisdom, and most adapted to our nature.

If one should come from hell to warn sinners, it may be he would tell them of hell in such a manner as would have more of a tendency to drive men into despair, and set them a blaspheming as they do in hell, than to excite them to strive for salvation, and diligently to use the means which God hath appointed. But God knoweth what revelation of hell we can bear, and what hath the most tendency to do us good in this our infirm, dark, and sinful state. The declarations of one come from hell might more tend to drive us from God than to bring us near to him. It is best for us to be warned and instructed by God, who knows best how to do it.

These are some of the reasons why the warnings of God's word have more of a tendency to bring us to repentance, than the warning of one risen from the dead.

APPLICATION.

1. It is a natural inference from this doctrine, that if these means which God hath appointed do not answer to lead men to repentance and reformation, no others would. Although this be not an absolutely necessary consequence from the words of the doctrine; yet it seems to be Christ's aim to teach us, that if God's means will not answer, none will. Our own means, those which we can devise, however they may seem more likely at a distance to be effectual, if brought to the trial, will not prove to be better. The rich man thought that if his brethren were warned by one rising from the dead, they would surely repent. But Abraham tells him, he is mistaken.

If one rising from the dead would not answer the purpose, we may rationally conclude that no other kind of means, different from those appointed by God, would. For what can we think of, which seems to have more tendency to awaken men, and lead to repentance, than one coming from the dead to them; except those means which we enjoy. Indeed men can think of many means, which they may imagine, if they enjoyed them, would make them believe and repent: But they deceive themselves.

It may be they think, if they could see some prophet, and see him work miracles, that this would awaken them. But how was it when there were prophets? There has rarely been a more degenerate time than that of Elijah and Elisha, who wrought so many miracles. The people did not regard their prophecies nor their miracles; but walked in their own ways, and served their own gods, so that Elijah thought there was none left of the true worshippers of God. And how did they treat the prophet Jeremiah, solemnly warning them from God of their approaching destruction? And how often do the prophets complain that all their prophecies and warnings were neglected and despised!

Would it be sufficient if you could hear God speak from heaven? How was it in Moses' time, when they heard God speak out of the midst of the fire, and heard the voice of words exceeding loud and full of majesty, so that they exceedingly trembled; when they saw Mount Sinai all covered with smoke, and shaking exceedingly? How did they behave themselves? Did they all turn from their sins, and after that walk in the ways of God? It is true, they were very much affected at first, while it was a new and strange thing to them; but how hard-hearted and rebellious were they soon after! They did not scruple to rebel against this same great and glorious God. Yea, they made a golden calf while Moses was in the mount conversing with God, just after they had seen those dreadful appearances of divine majesty.

Thus they rebelled against the Lord, although they had seen so many miracles and wonders in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness; although they continually saw the pillar of cloud and of fire going before them, were continually fed in a miraculous manner with manna, and in the same miraculous manner made to drink water out of the rock.

Men are apt to think, that if they had lived in Christ's time, and had seen and heard him, and had seen his miracles, that they would have effectually convinced and turned them from sin. But how was it in fact? How few were there brought to repentance by all his discourses and miracles? How hard-hearted were they? Some were very much affected for a little while; but how few constant steady followers had he! He was, notwithstanding his miracles, rejected, despised, and even murdered by the people among whom he dwelt. And they were men of the same natures, as sinners in these days.

The scripture is full of instances, sufficient to convince us, that if the word of God will not awaken and convert sinners, nothing will. And we see enough in these days to convince us of it. Men sometimes meet with those things by which we should not imagine, if we did not see it, and were not used to it, but that they would be thoroughly awakened and reformed.—They sometimes hear the warnings of dying men expecting to go to hell. One would think this would be enough to awaken them; and it may be they are affected with it for the present: but it only touches them; it vanishes away, and is gone like a puff of wind.

Sometimes sinners themselves are laid upon beds of sickness, and their lives hang in doubt before them. They are brought to the sides of the grave, and to the very mouth of hell, and their hearts are full of terror and amazement. Yet if they recover, they soon forget it, and return to the ways of folly and wickedness. Sometimes this is repeated; they are taken sick

again, are again in extreme peril of death, their hearts are full of amazement, and they make many promises and vows; yet being recovered, they again soon forget all, and return to sin and folly. Such things are enough to convince us, that if the word of God be not sufficient to convince men and make them break off their sins, no external means would be sufficient.

Perhaps some may yet be ready to think, that if sinners should see hell, and hear the cries of the damned, that would be effectual, though nothing else would. But if we duly consider the matter, we shall see reason to think, that it would not have so great a tendency to turn men from sin, as the word of God. Such a thing would doubtless be effectual to terrify and affright men, and probably to death. Such a mean is not at all suitable to our nature and state in the world. If it should not fright men to death, it would not have so great a tendency to make them diligently use means for their salvation as the warnings of scripture. It would probably drive them to despair; or so take away their spirits that they would have no heart to seek God.—Instead of driving them to God, it would probably make them hate him the more. It would make them more like devils; and set them a blaspheming as the damned do. For while the hearts of men are filled with natural darkness, they cannot see the glory of the divine justice appearing in such extreme torments.

Therefore the means which God hath instituted for us, are doubtless the best, and most conducive to lead men to repentance and salvation. They are doubtless far better than any other which we can devise.

2. Hence we learn the dreadful hardness of men's hearts, since the word of God hath no more influence upon them, and they are no more moved and wrought upon by those means which infinite wisdom hath provided. The warnings of the word of God are, as you have heard, better and more powerful means than if one should rise from the dead to warn us, and tell us our danger, and the dreadfulness of the wrath of God. You have also heard, that if these means will not answer the end of awakening and leading sinners to repentance, no other will; neither the working of miracles, nor the hearing of God speak with an audible voice from heaven, nor any thing else. Yet, how few are there who are effectually wrought upon by the word of God! They are very thinly sown; there is but here and there one.

When we read how the children of Israel conducted themselves in the wilderness, how often they murmured and offended; we are ready to wonder at the hardness of their hearts. And when we read the history of Christ, and how the Jews hated and rejected him, notwithstanding his many miracles; we are

ready to wonder how they could be so hard-hearted. But we have as much reason to wonder at ourselves, for we have naturally the same sort of hearts that they had; and sinners in these days manifest a hardness of heart as much to be wondered at, in that they are not influenced by the word of God; for they who will not hear Moses and the prophets, Jesus Christ and his apostles, neither would be persuaded, if one should rise from the dead, or if an angel should come from heaven.

The best means of awakening and conversion, are plentifully enjoyed by us, much more plentifully in several respects, than they were by those who had only Moses and the prophets. In the first place, we have divine truth more fully revealed in the Bible than they had then. Light now shines abundantly clear. Gospel truth is revealed, not in types and shadows, but plainly. Heaven and hell are much more clearly and expressly made known. We are told, that the glory of that revelation was no glory in comparison with the revelation of the gospel.

Again, we have a greater plenty of Bibles than they had under the dispensation of Moses and the prophets. Then there was no such thing as printing, and Bibles were scarce things.—They seldom had any Bibles, any where else but in their synagogues. But now we have them in our houses; we can look into them when we please. Besides, Christ hath appointed the gospel-ministry, by which we have the word of God explained and enforced every week. Yet how little influence hath the word of God to bring men to repentance!

Let this strike conviction into those who never yet have found any such effect by the word of God. Though you are convinced of nothing else, yet you have abundant reason to be convinced, that your hearts are as hard as a stone, and that you are exceedingly stupid and sottish.

3. Hence we may learn how justly and fairly God deals with us. He gives us the best means of awakening and reclaiming us from our sins; better than if he had sent one from the dead to warn us. He gives us those means which are most suited to our nature and circumstances. He gives sinners abundant warning before he punishes them. What could he have done more than he hath done? We can devise or imagine no sort of warning which would have been better than what God hath given us. How justly, therefore, are ungodly men punished; how inexcusable will they be!

4. Let all make use of the means which God hath instituted. They are the best and only means by which we may expect to obtain salvation. We shall be most inexcusable, therefore, if we neglect them. Let us attend to the word of God, read and hear it carefully, consider it thoroughly, and daily walk by it. Let us be diligent in this work. The word of God

is a great price put into our hands to get wisdom and eternal salvation; let us, therefore, improve it while we have it, as we know not how soon we may be deprived of it; lest Christ say to us, as in Luke xix. 42: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

SERMON VII.*

HYPOCRITES DEFICIENT IN THE DUTY OF PRAYER.

Job xxvii. 10.

Will he always call upon God?

Concerning these words, I would observe,

1. Who it is that is here spoken of, *viz.* the hypocrite; as you may see, if you take the two preceding verses with the verse of the text. "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" Job's three friends, in their speeches to him, insisted much upon it, that he was an hypocrite. But Job, in this chapter, asserts his sincerity and integrity, and shows how different his own behaviour had been from that of hypocrites. Particularly he declares his steadfast and immoveable resolution of persevering and holding out in the ways of religion and righteousness to the end; as you may see in the six first verses. In the text, he shows how contrary to this steadfastness and perseverance the character of the hypocrite is, who is not wont thus to hold out in religion.

2. We may observe what duty of religion it is, with respect to which the hypocrite is deciphered in the text, and that is the duty of *prayer*, or calling upon God.

3. Here is something supposed of the hypocrite relating to this duty, *viz.* That he may continue in it *for a while*; he may call upon God for a season.

4. Something asserted, *viz.* That it is not the manner of hypocrites to continue *always* in this duty. *Will he always call upon God?* It is in the form of an interrogation, but the words have the force of a strong assertion, that however the

* Dated, June 1740.

hypocrite may call upon God for a season, yet he will not *always* continue in it.

DOCTRINE.

However hypocrites may continue for a season in the duty of prayer, yet it is their manner, after a while, in a great measure to leave it off.

In speaking upon this doctrine, I shall show,

I. How hypocrites often continue for a season to call upon God.

II. How it is their manner, after a while, in a great measure to leave off the practice of this duty.

III. Give some reasons why this is the manner of hypocrites.

I. I would show how hypocrites often continue for a season in the duty of prayer.

1. They do so for a while after they have received common illuminations and affections. While they are under awakenings, they may through fear of hell call upon God, and attend very constantly upon the duty of secret prayer. And after they have had some melting affections, having their hearts much moved with the goodness of God, or with some affecting encouragements, and false joy and comfort; while these impressions last, they continue to call upon God in the duty of secret prayer.

2. After they have obtained a hope, and have made profession of their good estate, they often continue for a while in the duty of secret prayer. For a while they are affected with their hope: they think that God hath delivered them out of a natural condition, and given them an interest in Christ, thus introducing them into a state of safety from that eternal misery which they lately feared. With this supposed kindness of God to them, they are much affected, and often find in themselves for a while a kind of love to God, excited by his supposed love to them. Now, while this affection towards God continues, the duties of religion seem pleasant to them; it is even with some delight that they approach to God in their closets; and for the present it may be, they think of no other than continuing to call upon God as long as they live.

Yea, they may continue in the duty of secret prayer for a while after the liveliness of their affections is past, through the influence of their former intentions. They intended to continue seeking God always; and now suddenly to leave off, would be too shocking to their own minds. And the force of their own preconceived notions, *viz.* That godly persons continue in religion, may have some effect. Therefore, though they have no

love to the duty of prayer, and begin to grow weary of it, yet, as they love their own hope, they are somewhat backward to take a course, which will prove it to be a false hope, and so deprive them of it.

If they should all at once bear the sign of a false hope, they would scare themselves. Their hope is dear to them, and it would fright them to see any plain evidence that it is not true. Hence, for a considerable time after the force of their illuminations and affections is over, and after they hate the duty of prayer—and would be glad to have done with it, if they could without showing themselves to be hypocrites—they hold up a kind of attendance upon the duty of secret prayer. This may keep up the outside of religion in them for a good while, and occasion it to be somewhat slowly that they are brought to neglect it. They must not leave off suddenly, because that would be too great a shock to their false peace. But they must come gradually to it, as they find their consciences can bear it, and as they can find out devices and salvos to cover the matter, and make their so doing consistent in their own opinion, with the truth of their hope.—But,

II. It is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, in a great measure, to leave off the practice of this duty. We are often taught, that the seeming goodness and piety of hypocrites is not of a lasting and persevering nature. It is so with respect to their practice of the duty of prayer in particular, and especially of secret prayer. They can omit this duty, and their omission of it not be taken notice of by others, who know what profession they have made. So that a regard to their own reputation doth not oblige them still to practise it. If others saw how they neglect it, it would exceedingly shock their charity towards them. But their neglect doth not fall under their observation; at least not under the observation of many. Therefore they may omit this duty, and still have the credit of being converted persons.

Men of this character can come to a neglect of secret prayer, by degrees, without shocking their peace. For though indeed, for a converted person to live in a great measure without secret prayer, is very wide of the notion they once had of a true convert, yet they find means by degrees to alter their notions, and to bring their principles to suit with their inclinations; and at length they come to a notion, that a man may be a convert, and yet live very much in neglect of this duty. In time, they can bring all things to suit well together; as a hope of heaven, an indulgence of sloth, gratifying carnal appetites, and living in a great measure a prayerless life. They cannot, indeed, suddenly make these things agree; it must be a work of time; and length of time will effect it. By degrees they find out ways to guard and defend their consciences against those powerful enemies;

so that those enemies, and a quiet, secure conscience, can at length dwell together.

Whereas it is asserted in the doctrine, that it is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, in a great measure, to leave off this duty; I would observe to you,

1. That it is not intended, but that they may commonly continue to the end of life in an external attendance on prayer with others. They may commonly be present at public prayers in the congregation, and also at family prayer. This, in such places of light as this is, men commonly do before they are so much as awakened. Many vicious persons, who make no pretence to serious religion, commonly attend public prayers in the congregation, and also more private prayers in the families in which they live, unless it be when carnal designs interfere, or when their youthful pleasures and diversions, and their vain company call them; and then they make no conscience of attending family prayer. Otherwise they may continue to attend upon prayer as long as they live, and yet may truly be said not to call upon God. For such prayer, in the manner of it, is not their own. They are present only for the sake of their credit, or in compliance with others. They may be present at these prayers, and yet have no proper prayer of their own. Many of those, concerning whom it may be said, as in Job xv. 4, that *they cast off fear and restrain prayer before God*, are yet frequently present at family and public prayers.

2. But they, in a great measure, leave off the practice of secret prayer. They come to this pass by degrees. At first they begin to be careless about it, under some particular temptations. Because they have been out in young company, or have been taken up very much with worldly business, they omit it once: after that they more easily omit it again. Thus it presently becomes a frequent thing with them to omit it; and, after a while, it comes to that pass, that they seldom attend it. Perhaps they attend it on Sabbath days, and sometimes on other days. But they have ceased to make it a constant practice daily to retire to worship God alone, and to seek his face in secret places. They sometimes do a little to quiet conscience, and just to keep alive their old hope; because it would be shocking to them, even after all their subtile dealing with their consciences, to call themselves converts, and yet totally to live without prayer. Yet the practice of secret prayer they have in a great measure left off.—I come now,

III. To the reasons why this is the manner of hypocrites.

1. Hypocrites never had the spirit of prayer. They may have been stirred up to the external performance of this duty, and that with a great deal of earnestness and affection, and yet always have been destitute of the true spirit of prayer. The

spirit of prayer is a holy spirit, a gracious spirit. We read of the spirit of grace and supplication; Zech. xii. 10. "I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications." Wherever there is a true spirit of supplication, there is the spirit of grace. The true spirit of prayer is no other than God's own Spirit dwelling in the hearts of the saints. And as this spirit comes from God, so doth it naturally tend to God in holy breathings and pantings. It naturally leads to God to converse with him by prayer.—Therefore the spirit is said to make intercession for the saints with groanings which cannot be uttered; Rom. viii. 26.

The Spirit of God makes intercession for them, as it is that Spirit which in some respect indites their prayers, and leads them to pour out their souls before God. Therefore the saints are said to worship God in the Spirit; Phil. iii. 3. "We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit;" and John iv. 23. "The true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth." The truly godly have the spirit of adoption, the spirit of a child, to which it is natural to go to God, and call upon him, crying to him as to a father.

But hypocrites have nothing of this spirit of adoption:—They have not the spirit of children; for this is a gracious and holy spirit, given only in a real work of regeneration. Therefore, it is often mentioned as a part of the distinguishing character of the godly, that they call upon God. Psalm cxiv. 18, 19. "The Lord is nigh to them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he will, also, hear their cry, and will save them." Joel ii. 32. "It shall come to pass, that whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord, shall be saved."

It is natural to one who is truly born from above, to pray to God, and to pour out his soul in holy supplications before his heavenly Father. This is as natural to the new nature and life, as breathing is to the nature and life of the body. But hypocrites have not this new nature. Those illuminations and affections which they had, went away, and left no change of nature. Therefore, prayer naturally dies away in them, having no foundation laid in the nature of the soul. It is maintained a while only by a certain force put upon nature. But force is not constant; and as that declines, nature will take place again.

The spirit of a true convert, is a spirit of true love to God, and that naturally inclines the soul to those duties wherein it is conversant with God, and makes it to delight in approaching him. But an hypocrite hath no such spirit. He is left under the reigning power of enmity against God, which naturally inclines him to shun his presence.

The spirit of a true convert is a spirit of faith and reliance on the power, wisdom, and mercy of God, and such a spirit is

naturally expressed in prayer. True prayer is nothing else but faith expressed. Hence we read of the prayer of faith; James v. 15. True Christian prayer is the faith and reliance of the soul breathed forth in words. But an hypocrite is without the spirit of faith. He hath no true reliance or dependence on God, but is really self-dependent.

As to those common convictions and affections which the hypocrite had, and which made him keep up the duty of prayer for a while, they not reaching the bottom of the heart, nor being accompanied with any change of nature, a little thing extinguishes them. The cares of the world commonly choke and suffocate them, and often the pleasures and vanities of youth totally put an end to them, and with them ends their constant practice of the duty of prayer.

2. When an hypocrite hath had his false conversion, his wants are in his sense of things already supplied, his desires are already answered; and so he finds no further business at the throne of grace. He never was sensible that he had any other needs, but a need of being safe from hell. And now that he is converted, as he thinks, that need is supplied. Why then should he still go on to resort to the throne of grace with earnest requests? He is out of danger; all that he was afraid of, is removed: he hath got enough to carry him to heaven, and what more should he desire?—While under awakenings, he had this to stir him up to go to God in prayer, that he was in continual fear of hell. This put him upon crying to God for mercy. But since in his own opinion he is converted, he hath no further business about which to go to God. And although he may keep up the duty of prayer in the outward form a little while, for fear of spoiling his hope, yet he will find it a dull business to continue it without necessity, and so by degrees he will let drop the practice. The work of the hypocrite is done when he is converted, and therefore he standeth in no further need of help.

But it is far otherwise with the true convert. His work is not done; but he finds still a great work to do, and great wants to be supplied. He sees himself still to be a poor, empty, helpless creature, and that he still stands in great and continual need of God's help. He is sensible that without God he can do nothing. A false conversion makes a man in his own eyes self-sufficient. He saith he is rich, and increased with good, and hath need of nothing; and knoweth not that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. But after a true conversion, the soul remains sensible of its own impotence and emptiness, as it is in itself, and its sense of it is rather increased than diminished. It is still sensible of its universal dependence on God for every thing. A true convert is sensible that his grace is very imperfect; and he is very far from having all that

he desires. Instead of that, by conversion are begotten in him new desires which he never had before. He now finds in him holy appetites, an hungering and thirsting after righteousness, a longing after more acquaintance and communion with God.—So that he hath business enough still at the throne of grace; yea, his business there, instead of being diminished, is rather increased.

3. The hope which the hypocrite hath of his good estate takes off the force that the command of God before had upon his conscience; so that now he dares neglect so plain a duty.—The command which requires the practice of the duty of prayer is exceeding plain; Matt. xxvi. 41. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Eph. vi. 18. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with *all perseverance*, and supplication for all saints." Matt. vi. 6. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." As long as the hypocrite was in his own apprehension in continual danger of hell, he durst not disobey these commands. But since he is, as he thinks, safe from hell, he is grown bold, he dares to live in the neglect of the plainest command in the Bible.

4. It is the manner of hypocrites, after awhile, to return to sinful practices, which will tend to keep them from praying. While they were under convictions, they reformed their lives, and walked very exactly. This reformation continues, after their supposed conversion, while they are much affected with hope and false comfort. But as these things die away, their old lusts revive, and by degrees they return like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.—They return to their sensual, worldly, proud, and contentious practices, as before. And no wonder this makes them forsake their closets. Sinning and praying agree not well together. If a man be constant in the duty of secret prayer, it will tend to restrain him from wilful sinning. So, on the other hand, if he allow himself in sinful practices, it will restrain him from praying. It will give quite another turn to his mind, so that he will have no disposition to the practice of such a duty: it will be contrary to him. A man who knows that he lives in sin against God, will not be inclined to come daily into the presence of God; but will rather be inclined to fly from his presence, as Adam, when he had eaten of the forbidden fruit, ran away from God, and hid himself among the trees of the garden.

To keep up the duty of prayer after he hath given loose to his lusts, would tend very much to disquiet a man's conscience. It would give advantage to his conscience to testify aloud against him. If he should come from his wickedness into the presence of God, immediately to speak to him, his conscience would, as

it were, fly in his face. Therefore hypocrites, as they by degrees admit their wicked practices, exclude prayer.

5. Hypocrites never counted the cost of perseverance in seeking God, and of following him to the end of life. To continue instant in prayer with all perseverance to the end of life, requires much care, watchfulness, and labour. For much opposition is made to it by the flesh, the world, and the devil; and Christians meet with many temptations to forsake this practice. He that would persevere in this duty must be laborious in religion in general. But hypocrites never count the cost of such labour; *i. e.* they never were prepared in the disposition of their minds to give their lives to the service of God and to the duties of religion. It is therefore no great wonder they are weary, and give up, after they have continued for a while, as their affections are gone, and they find that prayer to them grows irksome and tedious.

6. Hypocrites have no interest in those gracious promises which God hath made to his people, of those spiritual supplies which are needful in order to uphold them in the way of their duty to the end. God hath promised to true saints that they shall not forsake him; Jer. xxxii. 40. "I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." He hath promised that he will keep them in the way of their duty; 1 Thess. v. 23, 24. "And the God of peace sanctify you wholly. And I pray God, your spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."—But hypocrites have no interest in these and such like promises; and therefore are liable to fall away. If God do not uphold men, there is no dependence on their steadfastness. If the Spirit of God depart from them, they will soon become careless and profane, and there will be an end to their seeming devotion and piety.

The *application* may be in an use of *exhortation*, in two branches.

I. I would exhort those who have entertained a hope of their being true converts—and who since their supposed conversion have left off the duty of secret prayer, and ordinarily allow themselves in the omission of it—to throw away their hope. If you have left off calling upon God, it is time for you to leave off hoping and flattering yourselves with an imagination that you are the children of God. Probably it will be a very difficult thing for you to do this. It is hard for a man to let go a hope of heaven, on which he hath once allowed himself to lay hold, and which he hath retained for a considerable time. True conversion is a rare thing: but that men should be

brought off from a false hope of conversion, after they are once settled and established in it, and have continued in it for some time, is much more rare.

Those things in men which, if known, would be sufficient to convince others that they are hypocrites, will not convince themselves; and those things which would be sufficient to convince them concerning others, will not be sufficient to convince them concerning themselves. They can make larger allowances for themselves than they can for others. They can find out ways to solve objections against their own hope, when they can find none in the like case for their neighbour.

But if your case be such as is spoken of in the doctrine, it is surely time for you to seek a better hope, and another work of God's spirit, than ever you have yet experienced; something more thorough and effectual. When you find by experience, that the seed which was sown in your hearts, though at first it sprang up and seemed flourishing, is withering away, as by the heat of the sun, or is choked, as with thorns; this shows in what sort of ground the seed was sown, that it is either stony or thorny ground; and that, therefore, it is necessary you should pass through another change, whereby your heart may become good ground, which shall bring forth fruit with patience.

Insist not on that as a reason why you should not throw away your hope, that you had the judgment of others, that the change, of which you were the subject was right. It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, whether you be approved or condemned, and whether it be by minister or people, wise or unwise. 1 Cor. iv. 3. "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment." If your goodness have proved to be as the morning cloud and early dew; if you be one of those who have forsaken God, and left off calling upon his name, you have the judgment, and sentence of God in the scriptures against you, which is a thousand times more than to have the judgment of all the wise and godly men and ministers in the world in your favour.

Others, from your account of things, may have been obliged to have charity for you, and to think that—provided you were not mistaken, and in your account did not misrepresent things, or express them by wrong terms—you were really converted. But what a miserable foundation is this, upon which to build a hope as to your eternal state!

Here I request your attention to a few things in particular, which I have to say to you concerning your hope.

1. Why will you retain that hope, which, by evident experience, you find poisons you? Is it reasonable to think, that a holy hope, a hope that is from heaven, would have such an influence? No, surely; nothing of such a malignant influence

comes from that world of purity and glory. No poison groweth in the paradise of God. The same hope which leads men to sin in this world, will lead to hell hereafter. Why, therefore, will you retain such a hope, of which your own experience shews you the ill tendency, in that it encourages you to lead a wicked life? For, certainly, that life is a wicked life wherein you live in the neglect of so well-known a duty as that of secret prayer, and in the disobedience of so plain a command of God, as that by which this duty is enjoined. And is not a way of disobedience to God a way to hell?

If your own experience of the nature and tendency of your hope will not convince you of the falseness of it, what will? Are you resolved to retain your hope, let it prove ever so unsound and hurtful? Will you hold it fast till you go to hell with it? Many men cling to a false hope, and embrace it so closely, that they never let it go till the flames of hell cause their arms to unclench and let go their hold. Consider how you will answer it at the day of judgment, when God shall call you to an account for your folly in resting in such a hope. Will it be a sufficient answer for you to say, that you had the charity of others, and that they thought your conversion was right?

Certainly, it is foolish for men to imagine, that God had no more wisdom, or could contrive no other way of bestowing comfort and hope of eternal life, than one which should encourage men to forsake him.

SERMON VIII.

HYPOCRITES DEFICIENT IN THE DUTY OF PRAYER.

Job xxvii. 10.

Will he always call upon God?

From these words, our doctrine was, That however hypocrites may continue for a season in the duty of prayer, yet it is their manner, after a while, in a great measure to leave it off. This was our subject in the preceding discourse, in which, after having shown—how hypocrites often continue for a season to call upon God—how it is their manner, after a while in a great measure to leave it off—and having given the reasons why this is their manner, I came at length to make *application*, which I proposed to do in an use of *exhortation* in two branches; and first to exhort those who entertain a hope of their good estate, and yet live in the neglect of secret prayer, to reject their hope. One particular consideration I have already laid before men of this character, to the end just mentioned; and I now proceed to say to them,—

2. How is your conduct consistent with loving God above all. If you have not a spirit to love God above your dearest earthly friends, and your most pleasant earthly enjoyments; the scriptures are very plain, and full in it, that you are not true Christians. But if you had indeed such a spirit, would you thus grow weary of the practice of drawing near to him, and become habitually so averse to it, as in a great measure to cast off so plain a duty, which is so much the life of a child of God? It is the nature of love to be averse to absence, and to love a near access to those whom we love. We love to be with them; we delight to come often to them, and to have much conversation with them. But when a person who hath heretofore been wont to converse freely with another, by degrees forsakes him, grows strange, and converses with him but little, and that although the other be importunate with him for the continuance of their former intimacy; this plainly shows the coldness of his heart towards him.

The neglect of the duty of prayer seems to be inconsistent with supreme love to God also upon another account, and that is, that it is against the will of God so plainly revealed.—True love to God seeks to please him in every thing, and universally to conform to his will.

3. Your thus restraining prayer before God is not only inconsistent with the love. but also with the fear of God. It is an argument that you cast off fear, as is manifest by that text, Job xv. 4. *Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God.* While you thus live in the transgression of so plain a command of God, you evidently show, that there is no fear of God before your eyes. Psalm xxxvi. 1. "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes."

4. Consider how living in such a neglect is consistent with leading a holy life. We are abundantly instructed in scripture, that true Christians do lead a holy life: that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, Heb. xii. 14; and that every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure, 1 John iii. 3. In Prov. xvi. 17. it is said, "*The highway* of the upright is to depart from evil," *i. e.* the common beaten road in which all the godly travel. To the like purpose is Isa. xxxv. 8. "An *highway* shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the *way of holiness;* the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for *those*:" i. e. those redeemed persons spoken of in the foregoing verses. It is spoken of in Rom. viii. 1. as the character of all believers, that they walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

But how is a life, in a great measure prayerless, consistent with a holy life? To lead a holy life, is to lead a life devoted to God; a life of worshipping and serving God; a life consecrated to the service of God. But how doth he lead such a life who doth not so much as maintain the duty of prayer? How can such a man be said to walk by the spirit, and to be a servant of the Most High God? A holy life is a life of faith. The life that true Christians live in the world, they live by the faith of the Son of God. But who can believe that the man lives by faith who lives without prayer, which is the natural expression of faith? Prayer is as natural an expression of faith, as breathing is of life; and to say a man lives a life of faith, and yet lives a prayerless life, is every whit as inconsistent and incredible, as to say, that a man lives without breathing. A prayerless life is so far from being holy, that it is a profane life; he that lives so, lives like a Heathen, who calleth not on God's name; he that lives a prayerless life, lives without God in the world.

5. If you live in the neglect of secret prayer, you show your good-will to neglect all the worship of God. He that

prays only when he prays with others, would not pray at all, were it not that the eyes of others are upon him. He that will not pray where none but God seeth him, manifestly doth not pray at all out of respect to God, or regard to his all-seeing eye, and therefore doth in effect cast off all prayer. And he that casts off prayer, in effect casts off all the worship of God, of which prayer is the principal duty. Now, what a miserable saint is he who is no worshipper of God! He that casts off the worship of God, in effect casts off God himself: he refuses to own him, or to be conversant with him as his God. For the way in which men own God, and are conversant with him, as their God, is by worshipping him.

6. How can you expect to dwell with God for ever, if you so neglect and forsake him here? This your practice shews, that you place not your happiness in God, in nearness to him, and communion with him. He who refuses to visit and converse with a friend, and who in a great measure forsakes him, when he is abundantly invited and importuned to come; plainly shows that he places not his happiness in the company and conversation of that friend. Now, if this be the case with you respecting God, then how can you expect to have it for your happiness to all eternity, to be with God, and to enjoy holy communion with him?

Let those persons who hope they are converted, and yet have in a great measure left off the duty of secret prayer, and whose manner it is ordinarily to neglect it, for their own sake seriously consider these things. For what will it profit them to please themselves with *that*, while they live, which will fail them at last, and leave them in fearful and amazing disappointment!

It is probable, that some of you who have entertained a good opinion of your state, and have looked upon yourselves as converts—but have of late in a great measure left off the duty—will this evening attend secret prayer, and so may continue to do for a little while after your hearing this sermon, to the end that you may solve the objection which is made against the truth of your hope. But this will not hold. As it hath been in former instances of the like nature, so what you now hear, will have such effect upon you but a little while.—When the business and cares of the world shall again begin to crowd a little upon you, or the next time you shall go out into young company, it is probable you will again neglect this duty. After the next *frolic* to which you go, it is highly probable you will neglect not only secret, but also family prayer. Or, at least, after a while, you will come to the same pass as before, in casting off fear, and restraining prayer before God.

It is not very likely that you will ever *be constant and persevering in this duty*, until you shall have obtained a better principle in your hearts. The streams which have no springs to feed them will dry up. The drought and heat consume the snow-waters. Although they run plentifully in the spring, yet when the sun ascends higher, with a burning heat, they are gone. The seed that is sown in stony places, though it seem to flourish at present, yet as the sun shall rise with a burning heat, will wither away. None will bring forth fruit with patience, but those whose hearts are become good ground.

Without any heavenly seed remaining in them, men may, whenever they fall in among the godly, continue all their lives to talk like saints. They may, for their credit sake, tell of what they have experienced: but their *deeds* will not hold. They may continue to tell of their inward experiences, and yet live in the neglect of secret prayer, and of other duties.

II. I would take occasion from this doctrine, to exhort all to persevere in the duty of prayer. This exhortation is much insisted on in the word of God. It is insisted on in the Old Testament; 1 Chron. xvi. 11. "Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face *continually*." Isa. lxii. 7. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence:" *i. e.* be not silent as to the voice of prayer, as is manifest by the following words, "and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Israel of old is reproved for growing weary of the duty of prayer. Isa. xliii. 22. "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, thou hast been weary of me, O Israel."

Perseverance in the duty of prayer, is very much insisted on in the New Testament; as Luke xviii. at the beginning. "A man ought always to pray, and not to faint;" *i. e.* not to be discouraged or weary of the duty; but should always continue in it. Again, Luke xxi. 36: "Watch ye, therefore, and pray *always*." We have the example of Anna, the prophetess, set before us, Luke i. 36, &c., who, though she had lived to be more than an hundred years old, yet was not weary of this duty. It is said, "She departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." Cornelius also is commended for his constancy in this duty. It is said, that he prayed to God *always;* Acts x. 2. The apostle Paul in his epistles, insists very much on constancy in this duty; Rom. xii. 12. "Continuing instant in prayer." Eph. vi. 18, 19. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Col. iv. 2. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same." 1 Thess. v. 17. "Pray without ceasing." To the same effect the apostle Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 7. "Watch unto prayer." Thus abun-

dantly the scriptures insist upon it, that we should persevere in the duty of prayer; which shows that it is of very great importance that we should persevere. If the contrary be the manner of hypocrites, as hath been shown in the doctrine, then surely we ought to beware of this leaven.

But here let the following things be particularly considered as motives to perseverance in this duty.

1. That perseverance in the way of duty is necessary to salvation, and is abundantly declared to be so in the holy scriptures; as Isa. lxiv. 5. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth, for we have sinned, in those is *continuance*, and we shall be saved." Heb. x. 38, 39. "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man *draw back*, my soul hath no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who *draw back unto perdition;* but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Rom. xi. 22. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou *continue* in his goodness; *otherwise* thou also shalt be cut off."—So in many other places.

Many, when they think they are converted, seem to imagine that their work is done, and that there is nothing else needful in order to their going to heaven. Indeed perseverance in holiness of life is not necessary to salvation in the same way as the righteousness by which a right to salvation is obtained. Nor is actual perseverance necessary in order to our becoming interested in that righteousness by which we are justified. For as soon as ever a soul hath believed in Christ, or hath put forth one act of faith in him, it becomes interested in his righteousness, and in all the promises purchased by it.

But persevering in the way of duty is necessary to salvation as a concomitant and evidence of a title to salvation. There is never a title to salvation without it, though it be not the righteousness by which a title to salvation is obtained. It is necessary to salvation, as it is the necessary consequence of true faith. It is an evidence which universally attends uprightness, and the defect of it is an infallible evidence of the want of uprightness. Psalm cxxv. 4, 5. There such as are good and upright in heart, are distinguished from such as fall away or turn aside: "Do good, O Lord, to those that are good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. As for such as *turn aside to their crooked ways*, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. But peace shall be upon Israel." It is mentioned as an evidence that the hearts of the children of Israel were not right with God, that they did not persevere in the ways of holiness. Psalm lxxviii. 8. A generation that set not their hearts aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God."

Christ gives this as a distinguishing character of those that are his disciples indeed, and of a true and saving faith, that it is accompanied with perseverance in obedience to Christ's word. John viii. 31. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." This is mentioned as a necessary evidence of an interest in Christ, Heb. iii. 14. "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end."

Perseverance is not only a necessary concomitant and evidence of a title to salvation; but also a necessary pre-requisite to the actual possession of eternal life. It is the only way to heaven, the narrow way that leadeth to life. Hence, Christ exhorts the church of Philadelphia to persevere in holiness from this consideration, that it was necessary in order to her obtaining the crown. Rev. iii. 11. "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." It is necessary not only that persons should once have been walking in the way of duty, but that they should be found so doing when Christ cometh. Luke xii. 43. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." Holding out to the end is often made the condition of actual salvation. Matt. x. 22. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved:" and Rev. ii. 10. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

2. In order to your own perseverance in the way of duty your own care and watchfulness is necessary. For though, it be promised that true saints shall persevere, yet that is no argument that their care and watchfulness is not necessary in order to it; because their care to keep the commands of God is the thing promised. If the saints should fail of care, watchfulness, and diligence to persevere in holiness, that failure of their care and diligence would itself be a failure of holiness. They who persevere not in watchfulness and diligence, persevere not in holiness of life, for holiness of life very much consists in watchfulness and diligence to keep the commands of God. It is one promise of the covenant of grace, that the saints shall keep God's commandments. Ezek. xi. 19, 20.—Yet that is no argument that they have no need to take care to keep these commandments, or to do their duty. So the promise of God, that the saints shall persevere in holiness, is no argument that it is not necessary that they should take heed lest they fall away.

Therefore, the scriptures abundantly warn men to watch over themselves diligently, and to give earnest heed lest they fall away. 1 Cor. x. 13. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." 1 Cor. x. 12. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Heb. iii. 12—14. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart

of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." Heb. iv. 1. "Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." 2 Pet. iii. 17. "Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." 2 John v. 8. "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."—Thus you see how earnestly the scriptures press on Christians, exhortations to take diligent heed to themselves that they fall not away. And certainly these cautions are not without reason.

The scriptures particularly insist upon watchfulness, in order to perseverance in the duty of prayer. *Watch and pray*, saith Christ; which implies, that we should watch unto prayer, as the apostle Peter says, 1 Pet. iv. 7. It implies, that we should watch against a neglect of prayer, as well as against other sins. The apostle, in places which have been already mentioned, directs us to pray with all prayer, watching thereunto with all perseverance, and to continue in prayer, and watch in the same. Nor is it any wonder that the apostles so much insisted on watching, in order to a continuance in prayer with all perseverance; for there are many temptations to neglect this duty; first to be inconstant in it, and from time to time to omit it; then, in a great measure to neglect it. The devil watches by temptation to draw us away from God, and to hinder us from going to him in prayer. We are surrounded with one and another tempting object, business, and diversion: particularly, we meet with many things which are great temptations to a neglect of this duty.

3. To move you to persevere in the duty of prayer, consider how much you always stand in need of the help of God. If persons who have formerly attended this duty, leave it off, the language of it is, that now they stand in no further need of God's help, that they have no further occasion to go to God with requests and supplications: when, indeed, it is in God we live, and move, and have our being. We cannot draw a breath without his help. You need his help every day for the supply of your outward wants; and especially you stand in continual need of him to help your souls. Without his protection, they would immediately fall into the hands of the devil, who always stands as a roaring lion ready, whenever he is permitted, to fall upon the souls of men and devour them. If God should, indeed, preserve your lives, but should otherwise forsake and leave you to your-

selves, you would be most miserable: your lives would be a curse to you.

Those that are converted, if God should forsake them, would soon fall away totally from a state of grace into a state far more miserable than ever they were in before their conversion. They have no strength of their own to resist those powerful enemies who surround them. Sin and Satan would immediately carry them away, as a mighty flood, if God should forsake them. You stand in need of daily supplies from God. Without God you can receive no spiritual light nor comfort, can exercise no grace, can bring forth no fruit. Without God your souls will wither and pine away, and sink into a most wretched state. You continually need the instructions and directions of God. What can a little child do in a vast howling wilderness, without some one to guide it, and to lead it in the right way? Without God, you will soon fall into snares, and pits, and many fatal calamities.

Seeing, therefore, you stand in such continual need of the help of God, how reasonable is it that you should continually seek it of him, and perseveringly acknowledge your dependence upon him, by resorting to him to spread your needs before him, and to offer up your requests to him in prayer. Let us consider how miserable we should be, if we should leave off prayer, and God, at the same time, should leave off to take care of us, or to afford us any more supplies of his grace. By our constancy in prayer, we cannot be profitable to God; and if we leave it off, God will sustain no damage: he doth not need our prayers; Job xxxv. 6, 7. But if God cease to care for us, and to help us, we immediately sink: we can do nothing: we can receive nothing without him.

4. Consider the great benefit of a constant, diligent, and persevering attendance on this duty. It is one of the greatest and most excellent means of nourishing the new nature, and of causing the soul to flourish and prosper. It is an excellent mean of keeping up an acquaintance with, and of growing in the knowledge of God. It is the way to a life of communion with God. It is an excellent mean of taking off the heart from the vanities of the world, and of causing the mind to be conversant in heaven. It is an excellent preservative from sin and the wiles of the devil, and a powerful antidote against the poison of the old serpent. It is a duty whereby strength is derived from God against the lusts and corruptions of the heart, and the snares of the world.

It hath a great tendency to keep the soul in a wakeful frame, and to lead us to a strict walk with God, and to a life that shall be fruitful in such good works, as tend to adorn the doctrine of Christ, and to cause our light so to shine before others, that they seeing our good works, shall glorify our Father who is

in heaven. And if the duty be constantly and diligently attended, it will be a very pleasant duty. Slack and slothful attendance upon it, and unsteadiness in it, are the causes which make it so great a burthen as it is to some persons. Their slothfulness in it hath naturally the effect to beget a dislike of the duty, and a great indisposition to it. But if it be constantly and diligently attended, it is one of the best means of leading not only a Christian and amiable, but also a pleasant life; a life of much sweet fellowship with Christ, and of the abundant enjoyment of the light of his countenance.

Besides, the great power which prayer, when duly attended, hath with God, is worthy of your notice. By it men become like Jacob, who as a prince had power with God and prevailed, when he wrestled for the blessing. See the power of prayer represented in James v. 16—18. By these things you may be sensible how much you will lose, if you shall be negligent in this great duty of calling upon God; and how ill you will consult your own interest by such a neglect.

I conclude my discourse with two directions in order to constancy and perseverance in this duty.

1. Watch against the beginnings of a neglect of this duty. Persons who have for a time practised, and afterwards neglect it, commonly leave it off by degrees. While their convictions and religious affections last, they are very constant in their closets, and no worldly business, or company or diversion, hinders them. But as their convictions and affections begin to die away, they begin to find excuses to neglect it sometimes.—They are now so hurried; they have now such and such things to attend to; or there are now such inconveniences in the way, that they persuade themselves they may very excusably omit it for this time. Afterwards it pretty frequently so happens, that they have something to hinder, something which they call a just excuse. After a while, a less thing becomes a sufficient excuse than was allowed to be such at first. Thus the person by degrees contracts more and more a habit of neglecting prayer, and becomes more and more indisposed to it. And even when he doth perform it, it is in such a poor, dull, heartless, miserable manner, that he says to himself, he might as well not do it at all, as do it thus. Thus he makes his own dulness and indisposition an excuse for wholly neglecting it, or at least for living in a great measure in its neglect.—After this manner do Satan and men's own corruptions inveigle them to their ruin.

Therefore beware of the first beginnings of a neglect: Watch against temptations to it: Take heed how you begin to allow excuses. Be watchful to keep up the duty in the height of it; let it not so much as begin to sink. For when you give way, though it be but little, it is like giving way to an enemy in

the field of battle: the first beginning of a retreat greatly encourages the enemy, and weakens the retreating soldiers.

2. Let me direct you to forsake all such practices as you find by experience do indispose you to the duty of secret prayer. Examine the things in which you have allowed yourselves, and inquire whether they have had this effect. You are able to look over your past behaviour, and may doubtless, on an impartial consideration, make a judgment of the practices and courses in which you have allowed yourselves.

Particularly let young people examine their manner of company keeping, and the round of diversions in which with their companions they have allowed themselves. I only desire that you would ask at the mouth of your own consciences what has been the effect of these things with respect to your attendance on the duty of secret prayer. Have you not found that such practices have tended to the neglect of this duty? Have you not found that after them you have been more indisposed to it, and less conscientious and careful to attend it? Yea, have they not from time to time, actually been the means of your neglecting it?

If you cannot deny that this is really the case, then if you seek the good of your souls, forsake these practices. Whatever you may plead for them, as that there is no harm in them, or that there is a time for all things, and the like; yet if you find this harm in the consequence, it is time for you to forsake them. And if you value heaven more than a little worldly diversion; if you set a higher price on eternal glory, than on a dance or a song, you will forsake them.

If these things be lawful in themselves, yet if your experience shew, that they are attended with such a consequence as I have now mentioned, that is enough. It is lawful in itself for you to enjoy your right hand and your right eye: but if by experience you find they cause you to offend, it is time for you to cut off the one, and pluck out the other, as you would rather go to heaven without them than to go to hell with them, into that place of torment where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

SERMON IX.*

THE FUTURE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED UNAVOIDABLE AND INTOLERABLE.

EZEK. XXII. 14.

Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it.

IN the former part of this chapter, we have a dreadful catalogue of the sins of Jerusalem; as you may see from the first to the thirteenth verse. In the thirteenth, which is the verse preceding the text, God manifests his great displeasure and fearful wrath against them for their iniquities. "Behold, I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee." The expression of God's smiting his hand, signifies the greatness of his anger, and his preparing himself, as it were, to execute wrath answerable to their heinous crimes. It is an allusion to what we sometimes see in men when they are surprised, by seeing or hearing of some horrid offence, or most intolerable injury, which very much stirs their spirits, and animates them with high resentment; on such an occasion they will rise up in wrath and smite their hands together, as an expression of the heat of their indignation, and full resolution to be avenged on those who have committed the injury; as in chap. xxii. 17. "I will also smite mine hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest; I the Lord have said it." Then, in the text, the punishment of that people is represented.

1. The nature of their punishment is more generally represented in that, God will undertake to *deal* with them. The prophets could do nothing with them. God had sent them one after another; but those sinners were too strong for them, and

* Dated, April 1741.

beat one, and killed another. Therefore now God himself undertakes to deal with them.

2. Their punishment is more particularly represented in three things, *viz.* The intolerableness, the remedilessness, and the unavoidableness of it.—The *intolerableness* of it: *can thine heart endure?* Its *remedilessness*, or the impossibility of their doing any thing for their own relief: *can thine hands be strong?* —Its *unavoidableness: I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it.*

DOCTRINE.

Since God hath undertaken to deal with impenitent sinners, they shall neither shun the threatened misery, nor deliver themselves out of it, nor can they bear it.

In handling this doctrine I shall, 1. Shew what is implied in God's undertaking to deal with impenitent sinners. 2. That therefore they cannot avoid punishment. 3. That they cannot in any measure deliver themselves from it; or do any thing for their own relief under it. 4. That they cannot bear it. 5. I shall answer an inquiry; and then proceed to the use.

I. I shall shew what is implied in God's undertaking to deal with impenitent sinners. Others are not able to deal with them. They baffle all the means used with them by those that are appointed to teach and to rule over them. They will not yield to parents, or to the counsels, warnings, or reproofs of ministers: they prove obstinate and stiff-hearted. Therefore God undertakes to deal with them. This implies the following things:

1. That God will *reckon* with them, and take of them satisfaction to his justice. In this world God puts forth his authority to command them, and to require their subjection to him. In his commands he is very positive, strictly requiring of them the performance of duties, and as positively forbidding things contrary to their duty. But they have no regard to these commands. God continues commanding, and they continue rebelling. They make nothing of God's authority. God threatens, but they despise his threatenings. They make nothing of dishonouring God: they care not how much their behaviour is to his dishonour. He offers them mercy, if they will repent and return: but they despise his mercy as well as his wrath.—God calleth, but they refuse. Thus they are continually plunging themselves deeper and deeper in debt, and at the same time imagine they shall escape the payment of the debt, and design entirely to rob God of his due.

But God hath undertaken to right himself. He will reckon with them: he hath undertaken to see that the debts due to him

are paid. All their sins are written in his book; not one of them is forgotten, and every one must be paid. If God be wise enough, and strong enough, he will have full satisfaction; he will exact the very utmost farthing. He undertakes it as his part, as what belongs to him, to see himself righted, wherein he hath been wronged. Deut. xxxii. 35. "To me belongeth vengeance." Ibid. vii. 10. "He will not be slack to him that hateth him; he will repay him to his face."

2. He hath undertaken to *vindicate* the honour of his majesty. His majesty they despise. They hear that he is a great God; but they despise his greatness; they look upon him as worthy of contempt, and treat him accordingly. They hear of him by the name of a great king; but his authority they regard not, and sometimes trample upon it for years together.

But God hath not left the honour of his majesty wholly to their care. Though they now trample it in the dust, yet that is no sign that it will finally be lost. If God had left it wholly in their hands, it would indeed be lost. But God doth not leave his honour and his glory with his enemies; it is too precious in his eyes to be so neglected. He hath reserved the care of it to himself: he will see to it, that his own injured majesty is vindicated. If the honour of God, upon which sinners trample, finally lie in the dust, it will be because he is not strong enough to vindicate himself. He hath sworn, in Numb. xiv. 21, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

Sinners despise his Son, and trample him under their feet; but he will see if he cannot make the glory of his Son appear, with respect to them; that all the earth may know how evil a thing it is to despise the Son of God. God intends that all men and angels, all heaven and all earth, shall see whether he be sufficient to magnify himself upon sinners who now despise him. He intends that the issue of things with respect to them shall be open, that all men may see it.

3. He hath undertaken to *subdue* impenitent sinners. Their hearts, while in this world, are very unsubdued. They lift up their heads and conduct themselves very proudly and contemptuously, and often sin with a high hand. They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongues walk through the earth. They practically say, as Pharaoh did, "Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord, neither will I obey his voice." Job xxi. 41. They say to God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

Some, who cover their sin with a specious show, who put on a face of religion, and a demure countenance and behaviour, yet have this spirit secretly reigning in their breasts. Notwithstanding all their fair show, and good external carriage, they despise God in their hearts, and have the weapons of war about

them, though they carry their swords under their skirts. They have most proud, stubborn, and rebellious hearts, which are ready to rise in opposition, to contend with him, and to find fault with his dispensations. Their hearts are full of pride, enmity, stubbornness, and blasphemy, which work in them many ways, while they sit under the preaching of the word, and while the Spirit of God is striving with them: and they always continue to oppose and resist God as long as they live in the world; they never lay down the weapons of their rebellion.

But God hath undertaken to deal with them, and to subdue them; and those proud and stubborn hearts, which will not yield to the power of God's word, shall be broken by the power of his hand. If they will not be willing subjects to the golden sceptre, and will not yield to the attractives of his love, they shall be subject to the force of the iron rod, whether they will or not.

Them that proudly set up their own righteousness, and their own wills, God hath undertaken to bring down: and, without doubt, it will be done. He hath undertaken to make those who are now regardless, to regard him. They shall know that he is Jehovah. Now they will not own that he is the Lord; but they shall know it. Isaiah xxvi. 11. "Lord, when thine hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see."

Now wicked men not only hate God, but they slight him; they are not afraid of him. But he will subdue their contempt. When he shall come to take them in hand, they will hate him still; but they will not slight him; they will not make light of his power as they now do; they will see and feel too much of the infinity of his power to slight it. They are now wont to slight his wrath; but then they will slight it no more; they will find by sufficient experience, that his wrath is not to be slighted: they will learn this to their cost, and they never will forget it.

4. God hath undertaken to rectify their *judgments*. Now they will not be convinced of those things which God tells them in his word. Ministers take much pains to convince them, but all is in vain. Therefore God will undertake to convince them, and he will do it effectually. Now they will not be convinced of the truth of divine things. They have, indeed, convincing arguments set before them; they hear and see enough to convince them; yet, so prone are they to unbelief and atheism, that divine things never seem to them to be real. But God will hereafter make them seem real.

Now they are always doubting of the truth of the scriptures, questioning whether they be the word of God, and whether the threatenings of scripture be true. But God hath undertaken to convince them, that those threatenings are true, and he will make them to know that they are true, so that they will never doubt any more for ever. They will be convinced by dear

experience. Now they are always questioning whether there be any such place as hell. They hear much about it, but it always seems to them like a dream. But God will make it seem otherwise than a dream. Now they are often told of the vanity of the world; but we may as well preach to the beasts, to persuade them of the vanity of earthly things. But God will undertake to convince them of this; he will hereafter give them a thorough conviction of it, so that they shall have a strong sense of the vanity of all these things.

Now ministers often tell sinners, of the great importance of an interest in Christ, and that that is the one thing needful. They are also told the folly of delaying the care of their souls, and how much it concerns them to improve their opportunity. But the instructions of ministers do not convince them, therefore God will undertake to convince them.

Impenitent sinners, while in this world, hear how dreadful hell is. But they will not believe that it is so dreadful as ministers represent. They cannot think that they shall to all eternity suffer such exquisite and horrible torments. But they shall be taught and convinced to purpose, that the representations ministers give of those torments, agreeable to the word of God, are indeed as dreadful as they declare.—Since God hath undertaken to deal with sinners, and to rectify their judgments in these matters, he will do it thoroughly; for his work is perfect: when he undertakes to do things, he doth not do them by halves; therefore before he shall have done with sinners, he will convince them effectually, so that they shall never be in danger of relapsing into their former errors. He will convince them of their folly and stupidity in entertaining such notions as they now entertain.

Thus God hath undertaken to deal with obstinate unbelievers. They carry things on in great confusion; but we need not be dismayed at it: let us wait, and we shall see that God will rectify things. Sinners will not always continue to rebel and despise with impunity. The honour of God will in due time be vindicated; and they shall be subdued and convicted, and shall give an account. There is no sin, not so much as an idle word that they shall speak, but they must give an account of it; Matt. xii. 36. And their sins must be fully balanced, and recompensed, and satisfaction obtained. Because judgment against their evil works, is not speedily executed, their hearts are fully set in them to do evil. Yet God is a righteous judge; he will see that judgment is executed in due time.—I come now,

II. To show, that therefore impenitent sinners shall *not avoid* their due punishment. God hath undertaken to inflict it; he hath engaged to do it; he takes it as what properly be-

longs to him, and we may expect it of him. If he hath sworn by his life, that he will do it; and if he hath power sufficient; if he is the living God, doubtless we shall see it done. And that God hath declared that he will punish impenitent sinners, is manifest from many scriptures; as Deut. xxxii. 41. "I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." Deut. vii. 10. "He will not be slack to him that hateth him; he will repay him to his face." Exod. xxxiv. 7. "That will by no means clear the guilty." Nahum i. 3. "The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked."

God saith in the text, "I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it;" which leaves no room to doubt of the actual fulfilment of the threatening in its utmost extent. Some have flattered themselves, that although God hath threatened very dreadful things to wicked men for their sins, yet in his heart he never intends to fulfil his threatenings, but only to terrify them, and make them afraid, while they live. But would the infinitely holy God, who is not a man that he should lie, and who speaketh no vain words, utter himself in this manner: *I the Lord have spoken it and will do it; I have not only threatened, but I will also fulfil my threatenings;* when at the same time these words did not agree with his heart, but he secretly knew that though he had spoken, yet he intended not to do it? Who is he that dares to entertain such horrid blasphemy in his heart?

No; let no impenitent sinner flatter himself so vainly and foolishly. If he were indeed only a man, a being of like impotency and mutability with themselves, who had undertaken to deal with them; they might perhaps with some reason flatter themselves, that they should find some means to avoid the threatened punishment. But since an omniscient, omnipotent, immutable God hath undertaken, vain are all such hopes.

There is no hope that possibly they may steal away to heaven, though they die unconverted. There is no hope that they can deceive God by any false show of repentance and faith, and so be taken to heaven through mistake: for the eyes of God are as a flame of fire; they perfectly see through every man; the inmost closet of the heart is all open to him.

There is no hope of escaping the threatened punishment by sinking into nothing at death, like brute creatures. Indeed, many wicked men upon their death-beds wish for this. If it were so, death would be nothing to them in comparison with what it now is. But all such wishes are vain.

There is no hope of their escaping without notice, when they leave the body. There is no hope that God, by reason of the multiplicity of affairs which he hath to mind, will happen

to overlook them and not take notice of them, when they come to die; that their souls will slip away privately, and hide themselves in some secret corner, and so escape divine vengeance.

There is no hope that they shall be missed in a crowd at the day of judgment, and that they can have opportunity to hide themselves in some cave or den of the mountains, or in any secret hole of the earth; and that while so doing, they will not be minded, by reason of the many things which will be the objects of attention on that day,—neither is there any hope that they will be able to crowd themselves in among the multitude of the saints at the right hand of the Judge, and so go to heaven undiscovered. Nor is there any hope that God will alter his mind, or that he will repent of what he hath said; for he is not the son of man, that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? When did God ever undertake to do any thing and fail:—I come now,

III. To show, that as impenitent sinners cannot shun the threatened punishment; so neither can they do any thing to *deliver* themselves from it, or to relieve themselves under it. This is implied in those words of the text, *Can thine hands be strong?* It is with our hands that we make and accomplish things for ourselves. But the wicked in hell will have no strength of hand to accomplish any thing at all for themselves, or to bring to pass any deliverance, or any degree of relief.

1. They will not be able in that conflict to *overcome* their enemy, and so to deliver themselves. God, who will then undertake to deal with them, and will gird himself with might to execute wrath, will be their enemy, and will act the part of an enemy with a witness; and they will have no strength to oppose him. Those who live negligent of their souls under the light of the gospel, act as if they supposed, that they should be able hereafter to make their part good with God. 1 Cor. x. 22. "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?"—But they will have no power, no might to resist that omnipotence, which will be engaged against them.

2. They will have no strength in their hands to do any thing to appease God, or in the least to abate the fierceness of his wrath. They will not be able to offer any satisfaction: they will not be able to procure God's pity. Though they cry, God will not hear them. They will find no price to offer to God, in order to purchase favour, or to pay any part of their debt.

3. They will not be able to find any to *befriend* them, and intercede with God for them. They had the offer of a mediator often made them in this world; but they will have no such offers in hell. None will befriend them: in hell, all there will be

their enemies. They will have no friend in heaven: none of the saints or angels will befriend them: or if they should, it would be to no purpose. There will be no creature that will have any power to deliver them, nor will any ever pity them.

4. Nor will they ever be able to make their escape. They will find no means to break prison and flee. In hell they will be reserved in chains of darkness for ever and ever. Malefactors have often found means to escape the hand of civil justice. But none ever escaped out of the prison of hell, which is God's prison. It is a strong prison: it is beyond any finite power, or the united strength of all wicked men and devils, to unlock, or break open the door of that prison. Christ hath the key of hell; "he shuts and no man opens."

5. Nor will they ever be able to find any thing to *relieve* them in hell. They will never find any resting place there; any secret corner, which will be cooler than the rest, where they may have a little respite, a small abatement of the extremity of their torment. They never will be able to find any cooling stream or fountain, in any part of that world of torment; no, nor so much as a drop of water to cool their tongues. They will find no company to give them any comfort, or to do them the least good. They will find no place, where they can remain, and rest, and take breath for one minute: for they will be tormented with fire and brimstone; and will have no rest day nor night for ever and ever.

Thus impenitent sinners will be able neither to shun the punishment threatened, nor to deliver themselves from it, nor to find any relief under it.

SERMON X.

THE FUTURE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED UNAVOIDABLE AND INTOLERABLE.

EZEK. XXII. 14.

Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it.

HAVING shown that impenitent sinners will hereafter be able, neither to avoid the punishment threatened, nor to deliver themselves from it, nor to find any relief under it; I come now,

IV. To show, that neither will they be able to *bear it.*— Neither will their hands be strong to deliver them from it, nor will their hearts be able to endure it. It is common with men, when they meet with calamities in this world, in the first place to endeavour to shun them. But if they find, that they cannot shun them; then after they are come, they endeavour to deliver themselves from them as soon as they can; or at least, to deliver themselves in some degree. But if they find that they can by no means deliver themselves, and see that they must bear them; then they fortify their spirits, and take up a resolution, that they will support themselves under them as well as they can.

But it will be utterly in vain for impenitent sinners to think to do thus with respect to the torments of hell. They will not be able to endure them, or at all to support themselves under them: the torment will be immensely beyond their strength.— What will it signify for a worm, which is about to be pressed under the weight of some great rock, to be let fall with its whole weight upon it, to collect its strength, to set itself to bear

up the weight of the rock, and to preserve itself from being crushed by it?—Much more vain will it be for a poor damned soul, to endeavour to support itself under the weight of the wrath of Almighty God. What is the strength of man, who is but a worm, to support himself against the power of Jehovah, and against the fierceness of his wrath? What is man's strength, when set to bear up against the exertions of infinite power? Matt. xxi. 44. "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

When sinners hear of hell-torments, they sometimes think with themselves; Well, if it shall come to that, that I must go to hell, I will bear it as well as I can: as if by clothing themselves with resolution and firmness of mind, they would be able to support themselves in some measure: when alas! they will have no resolution, no courage at all. However they shall have prepared themselves, and collected their strength; yet as soon as they shall begin to feel that wrath, their hearts will melt and be as water. However they may seem to harden their hearts, in order to prepare themselves to bear, yet the first moment they feel it, their hearts will become like wax before the furnace.—Their courage and resolution will be all gone in an instant; it will vanish away like a shadow in the twinkling of an eye. The stoutest and most sturdy will have no more courage than the feeblest infant: let a man be an infant, or a giant, it will be all one. They will not be able to keep alive any courage, any strength, any comfort, any hope at all.—I come now as was proposed,

V. To answer an inquiry which may naturally be raised concerning these things.

Inq. Some may be ready to say, If this be the case, if impenitent sinners can neither shun future punishment, nor deliver themselves from it, nor bear it; then what will become of them?

Ans. They will wholly sink down into eternal death.—There will be that sinking of heart, of which we now cannot conceive. We see how it is with the body when in extreme pain. The nature of the body will support itself for a considerable time under very great pain, so as to keep from wholly sinking. There will be great struggles, lamentable groans and pantings, and it may be convulsions. These are the strugglings of nature to support itself under the extremity of the pain.—There is, as it were, a great lothness in nature to yield to it; it cannot bear wholly to sink.

But yet sometimes pain of body is so very exquisite, that the nature of the body cannot support itself under it; however loth it may be to sink, yet it cannot bear the pain; there are

a few struggles, and throes, and pantings, and it may be a shriek or two, and then nature yields to the violence of the torments, sinks down, and the body dies. This is the death of the body. So it will be with the soul in hell; it will have no strength or power to deliver itself; and its torment and horror will be so great, so mighty, so vastly disproportioned to its strength, that having no strength in the least to support itself, although it be infinitely contrary to the nature and inclination of the soul utterly to sink; yet it will utterly and totally sink, without the least degree of remaining comfort, or strength, or courage, or hope. And though it will never be annihilated, its being and perception will never be abolished; yet such will be the infinite depth of gloominess into which it will sink, that it will be in a state of death, eternal death.

The nature of man desires happiness; it is the nature of the soul to crave and thirst after well-being: and if it be under misery, it eagerly pants after relief; and the greater the misery is, the more eagerly doth it struggle for help. But if all relief be withholden, all strength overborne, all support utterly gone; then it sinks into the darkness of death.

We can conceive but little of the matter; but to help your conception, imagine yourself to be cast into a fiery oven, or a great furnace, where your pain would be as much greater than that occasioned by accidentally touching a coal of fire, as the heat is greater. Imagine also that your body were to lie there for a quarter of an hour, full of fire, and all the while full of quick sense; what horror would you feel at the entrance of such a furnace! and how long would that quarter of an hour seem to you! And after you had endured it for one minute, how overbearing would it be to you to think that you had to endure it the other fourteen!

But what would be the effect on your soul, if you knew you must lie there enduring that torment to the full for twenty-four hours! And how much greater would be the effect, if you knew you must endure it for a whole year; and how vastly greater still, if you knew you must endure it for a thousand years!—O then, how would your hearts sink, if you knew, that you must bear it for ever and ever! that there would be no end! that after millions of millions of ages, your torment would be no nearer to an end, and that you never, never should be delivered!

But your torment in hell will be immensely greater than this illustration represents. How then will the heart of a poor creature sink under it! How utterly inexpressible and inconceivable must the sinking of the soul be in such a case!

This is the death threatened in the law. This is dying in the highest sense of the word. This is to die sensibly; to die and know it; to be sensible of the gloom of death. This is to

be undone; this is worthy of the name of destruction. This sinking of the soul under an infinite weight, which it cannot bear, is the gloom of hell. We read in scripture of the blackness of darkness; this is it, this is the very thing. We read in scripture of sinners being lost, and of their losing their souls; this is the thing intended; this is to lose the soul: they that are the subjects of this are utterly lost.

APPLICATION.

This subject may be applied in an use of awakening to impenitent sinners.—What hath been said under this doctrine is for thee, O impenitent sinner, O poor wretch, who art in the same miserable state in which thou camest into the world, excepting that thou art loaded with vastly greater guilt by thine actual sins. These dreadful things which thou hast heard are for thee, who art yet unconverted, and still remainest an alien and stranger, without Christ and without God in the world. They are for thee, who to this day remainest an enemy to God, and a child of the devil, even in this remarkable season, when others both here and elsewhere, far and near, are flocking to Christ; for thee who hearest the fame of these things, but knowest nothing of the power of godliness in thine own heart.

Whoever thou art, whether young or old, little or great, if thou art in a Christless unconverted state, this is the wrath, this is the death to which thou art condemned. This is the wrath that abideth on thee; this is the hell over which thou hangest, and into which thou art ready to drop every day and every night.

If thou shalt remain blind, and hard, and dead in sin a little longer, this destruction will come upon thee: God hath spoken, and he will do it. It is in vain for thee to flatter thyself with hopes that thou shalt avoid it, or to say in thine heart, perhaps it will not be; perhaps things have been represented worse than they are. If thou wilt not be convinced by the word preached to thee by men in the name of God, God himself will undertake to convince thee. Ezek. xiv. 4, 7, 8.

Doth it seem to thee not real that thou shalt suffer such a dreadful destruction, because it seems to thee that thou dost not deserve it? and because thou dost not see any thing so horrid in thyself, as to answer such a dreadful punishment?—Why is it that thy wickedness doth not seem bad enough to deserve this punishment? The reason is, that thou lovest thy wickedness; thy wickedness seems good to thee; it appears lovely to thee; thou dost not see any such hatefulness in it as to answer such misery.

But know, thou stupid, blind, hardened wretch, that God doth not see, as thou seest with thy polluted eyes: thy sins in

his sight are infinitely abominable. Thou knowest that thou hast a thousand and a thousand times made light of the majesty of God. And why should not that majesty, which thou hast thus despised, be manifested in the greatness of thy punishment?—Thou hast often heard what a great and dreadful God Jehovah is: but thou hast made so light of it, that thou hast not been afraid of him, thou hast not been afraid to sin against him, nor to go on day after day, by thy sins, to provoke him to wrath, nor to cast his commands under foot, and trample on them. Now, why may not God, in the greatness of thy destruction, justly vindicate and manifest the greatness of that majesty which thou hast despised?

Thou hast despised the mighty power of God; thou hast not been afraid of it. Now, why is it not fit that God should show the greatness of his power in thy ruin. What king is there who will not show his authority in the punishment of those subjects that despise it! and who will not vindicate his royal majesty in executing vengeance on those that rise in rebellion? And art thou such a fool as to think that the great King of heaven and earth, before whom all other kings are so many grasshoppers, will not vindicate his kingly majesty on such contemptuous rebels as thou art! Thou art very much mistaken if thou thinkest so. If thou be regardless of God's majesty, be it known to thee, God is not regardless of his own majesty; he taketh care of its honour, and he will vindicate it.

Think it not strange, that God should deal so severely with thee, or that the wrath which thou shalt suffer should be so great. For, as great as it is, it is no greater than that love of God which thou hast despised. The love of God, and his grace, condescension, and pity to sinners, in sending his Son into the world to die for them, is every whit as great and wonderful as this inexpressible wrath. This mercy hath been held forth to thee, and described in its wonderful greatness hundreds of times, and as often hath it been offered to thee; but thou wouldst not accept Christ; thou wouldst not have this great love of God; thou despisedst God's dying love; thou trampledst the benefits of it under foot. Now why shouldst not thou have wrath, as great as that love and mercy which thou despisest and rejectest? Doth it seem incredible to thee that God should so harden his heart against a poor sinner, as to destroy him, and to bear him down with infinite power and merciless wrath? and is this a greater thing than it is for thee to harden thy heart, as thou hast done, against infinite mercy, and against the dying love of God?

Doth it seem to thee incredible, that God should be so utterly regardless of the sinner's welfare, as to sink him into an infinite abyss of misery? Is this shocking to thee? And is it not at all shocking to thee, that thou shouldst be so utterly

regardless as thou hast been of the honour and glory of the infinite God?

It arises from thy stupidity, and because thou hast a heart of stone, that thou art so senseless of thine own wickedness, as to think that thou hast not deserved such a punishment, and that it is to thee incredible that it will be inflicted upon thee. But if, when all is said and done, thou be not convinced, wait but a little while, and thou wilt be convinced: God will undertake to do the work which ministers cannot do. Though judgment against thy evil works be not yet executed, and God now let thee alone, yet he will soon come upon thee with his great power, and then thou shalt know what God is, and what thou art.

Flatter not thyself, that if these things shall prove true, and the worst shall come, thou wilt set thyself to bear it as well as thou canst. What will it signify, to set thyself to bear and to collect thy strength to support thyself, when thou shalt fall into the hands of that omnipotent King, Jehovah? He that made thee, can make his sword approach unto thee. His sword is not the sword of man, nor is his wrath the wrath of man. If it were, possibly stoutness might be maintained under it. But it is the fierceness of the wrath of the great God, who is able to baffle and dissipate all thy strength in a moment. He can fill thy poor soul with an ocean of wrath, a deluge of fire and brimstone; or he can make it ten thousand times fuller of torment than ever an oven was full of fire; and, at the same time, can fill it with despair of ever seeing any end to its torment, or any rest from its misery: and then where will be thy strength? what will become of thy courage? what will signify thine attempts to bear?

What art thou in the hands of the great God, who made heaven and earth by speaking a word? What art thou, when dealt with by that strength, which manages all this vast universe, holds the globe of the earth, directs all the motions of the heavenly bodies from age to age, and, when the fixed time shall come, will shake all to pieces? There are other wicked beings a thousand times stronger than thou: there are strong and proud spirits of gigantic stoutness and hardiness. But how little are they in the hands of the great God! they are less than weak infants; they are nothing, and less than nothing in the hands of an angry God, as will appear at the day of judgment. Their hearts will be broken; they will sink; they will have no strength nor courage left; they will be as weak as water; their souls will sink down into an infinite gloom, an abyss of death and despair. Then what will become of thee, a poor worm, when thou shalt fall into the hands of that God, when he shall come to show his wrath, and make his power known on thee?

If the strength of all the wicked men on earth, and of all the devils in hell, were united in one, and thou wert possessed of it all; and if the courage, greatness, and stoutness of all their hearts were united in thy single heart, thou wouldst be nothing in the hands of Jehovah. If it were all collected, and thou shouldst set thyself to bear as well as thou couldst, all would sink under his great wrath in an instant, and would be utterly abolished: thine hands would drop down at once, and thine heart would melt as wax. The great mountains, the firm rocks, cannot stand before the power of God. He can tear the earth in pieces in a moment; yea, he can shatter the whole universe, and dash it to pieces at one blow. How then will thine hands be strong, or thine heart endure!

Thou canst not stand before a lion of the forest; an angry wild beast, if stirred up, will easily tear such an one as thou art in pieces. Yea not only so, but thou art crushed before the moth. A little thing, a little worm or spider, or some such insect, is able to kill thee. What then canst thou do in the hands of God! it is vain to set the briars and thorns in battle-array against glowing flames; the points of thorns, though sharp, do nothing to withstand the fire.

Some of you have seen buildings on fire; imagine therefore with yourselves, what a poor hand you would make at fighting with the flames, if you were in the midst of so great and fierce a fire. You have often seen a spider, or some other noisome insect, when thrown into the midst of a fierce fire, and have observed how immediately it yields to the force of the flames. There is no long struggle, no fighting against the fire, no strength exerted to oppose the heat, or to fly from it; but it immediately stretches forth itself and yields; and the fire takes possession of it, and at once it becomes full of fire. Here is a little image of what you will be in hell, except you repent and fly to Christ. To encourage yourselves, that you will set yourselves to bear hell-torments as well as you can, is just as if a worm, that is about to be thrown into a glowing furnace, should swell and fortify itself, and prepare itself to fight the flames.

What can you do with lightnings? What doth it signify to fight with them? What an absurd figure would a poor weak man make, who in a thunder storm should expect a flash of lightning on his head or his breast, and should go forth sword in hand to oppose it; when a flash would in an instant drink up all his spirits and his life, and melt his sword!

Consider these things, all you enemies of God, and rejecters of Christ, whether you be old men and women, Christless heads of families, or young people and wicked children. Be assured, that if you do not hearken and repent, God intends to show his wrath, and make his power known upon you. He

intends to magnify himself exceedingly in sinking you down in hell. He intends to show his great majesty at the day of judgment, before a vast assembly, in your misery; before a greater assembly many thousand-fold than ever yet appeared upon earth; before a vast assembly of saints, and a vast assembly of wicked men, a vast assembly of holy angels, and before all the crew of devils. God will before all these get himself honour in your destruction; you shall be tormented in the presence of them all. Then all will see that God is a great God indeed; then all will see how dreadful a thing it is to sin against such a God, and to reject such a Saviour, such love and grace, as you have rejected and despised. All will be filled with awe at the great sight, and all the saints and angels will look upon you, and adore that majesty, that mighty power, and that holiness and justice of God, which shall appear in your ineffable destruction and misery.

It is probable that some who hear me, are at this very moment unawakened, and are in a great degree careless about their souls. I fear there are some among us who are most fearfully hardened: their hearts are harder than the very rocks. It is easier to make impressions upon an adamant than upon their hearts. I suppose some of you have heard all that I have said with ease and quietness: it appears to you as great sounding words, but doth not reach your hearts. You have heard such things many times: You have been too much used to the roaring of heaven's cannon to be frightened at it. It will therefore probably be in vain for me to say any thing further to you; I will only put you in mind that ere long God will deal with you. I cannot deal with you, you despise what I say; I have no power to make you sensible of your danger and misery, and of the dreadfulness of the wrath of God. The attempts of men in this way have often proved vain.

However, God hath undertaken to deal with such men as you are. It is his manner commonly first to let men try their utmost strength; particularly to let ministers try, that thus he may show ministers their own weakness and impotency; and when they have done what they can, and all fails, then God takes the matter into his own hands. So it seems by your obstinacy, as if God intended to undertake to deal with you. He will undertake to subdue you; he will see, if he cannot cure you of your senselessness and regardlessness of his threatenings. And you will be convinced; you will be subdued effectually; your strength will be utterly broken, your courage and hope will sink. God will surely break those who will not bow.

Having girded himself with his power and wrath, he hath heretofore undertaken to deal with many hard stubborn, senseless, obstinate hearts; and he never failed, he always did his work thoroughly.

It will not be long before you will be wonderfully changed. You who now hear of hell and the wrath of the great God, and sit here so easy and quiet, and go away so careless; by and by will shake, and tremble, and cry out, and shriek, and gnash your teeth, and will be thoroughly convinced of the vast weight and importance of these things which you now despise.

SERMON XI.*

THE ETERNITY OF HELL TORMENTS.

Matt. xxv. 46.

These shall go away into everlasting punishment.

In this chapter we have the most particular description of the day of judgment of any in the whole Bible. Christ here declares, that when he shall hereafter sit on the throne of his glory, the righteous and the wicked shall be set before him, and separated one from the other, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. Then we have an account how both will be judged according to their works; how the good works of the one and the evil works of the other will be rehearsed, and how the sentence shall be pronounced accordingly. We are told what the sentence will be on each, and then we have an account of the execution of the sentence on both. In the words of the text is the account of the execution of the sentence on the wicked or the ungodly: concerning which, it is to my purpose to observe two things.

1. The duration of the punishment on which they are here said to enter: it is called everlasting punishment.

2. The time of their entrance on this everlasting punishment; *viz.* after the day of judgment, when all these things that are of a temporary continuance shall have come to an end, and even those of them that are most lasting—the frame of the world itself; the earth which is said to abide for ever; the ancient mountains and everlasting hills; the sun, moon, and stars. When the heavens shall have waxed old like a garment, and as a vesture shall be changed, then shall be the time when the wicked shall enter on their punishment.

* Dated, April 1739.

Doctrine.—The misery of the wicked in hell will be absolutely eternal.

There are two opinions which I mean to oppose in this doctrine. One is, That the eternal death with which wicked men are threatened in scripture, signifies no more than eternal annihilation; that God will punish their wickedness by eternally abolishing their being.

The other opinion which I mean to oppose, is, That though the punishment of the wicked shall consist in sensible misery, yet it shall not be absolutely eternal; but only of a very long continuance.

Therefore, to establish the doctrine in opposition to these different opinions, I shall undertake to show,

I. That it is not contrary to the divine perfections, to inflict on wicked men a punishment that is absolutely eternal.

II. That the eternal death which God threatens, is not annihilation, but an abiding, sensible punishment or misery.

III. That this misery will not only continue for a very long time, but will be absolutely without end.

IV. That various good ends will be obtained by the eternal punishment of the wicked.

I. I am to show that it is not contrary to the divine perfections, to inflict on wicked men a punishment that is absolutely eternal.

This is the sum of the objections usually made against this doctrine, That it is inconsistent with the justice, and especially with the mercy of God. And some say, if it be strictly just yet how can we suppose that a merciful God can bear eternally to torment his creatures.

1. I shall briefly show, That it is not inconsistent with the justice of God to inflict an eternal punishment. To evince this, I shall use only one argument, *viz.* that sin is heinous enough to deserve such a punishment, and such a punishment is no more than proportionable to the evil or demerit of sin. If the evil of sin be infinite, as the punishment is, then it is manifest that the punishment is no more than proportionable to the sin punished, and is no more than sin deserves. And if the obligation to love, honour, and obey God be infinite, then sin, which is the violation of this obligation, is a violation of infinite obligation, and so is an infinite evil. Again, if God be infinitely worthy of love, honour and obedience, then our obligation to love, and honour, and obey him, is infinitely great.—So that God being infinitely glorious. or infinitely worthy of our love,

honour, and obedience; our obligation to love, honour, and obey him, and so to avoid all sin, is infinitely great. Again, our obligation to love, honour and obey God, being infinitely great, sin is the violation of infinite obligation, and so is an infinite evil. Once more, sin being an infinite evil, deserves an infinite punishment, an infinite punishment is no more than it deserves: Therefore such punishment is just; which was the thing to be proved. There is no evading the force of this reasoning, but by denying that God, the sovereign of the universe, is infinitely glorious; which I presume none of my hearers will venture to do.

2. I am to show, That it is not inconsistent with the mercy of God, to inflict an eternal punishment on wicked men. It is an unreasonable and unscriptural notion of the mercy of God, that he is merciful in such a sense that he cannot bear that penal justice should be executed. This is to conceive of the mercy of God as a passion to which his nature is so subject that God is liable to be moved, and affected, and overcome by seeing a creature in misery, so that he cannot bear to see justice executed: which is a most unworthy and absurd notion of the mercy of God, and would, if true, argue great weakness. It would be a great defect, and not a perfection, in the sovereign and supreme Judge of the world, to be merciful in such a sense that he could not bear to have penal justice executed. It is a very unscriptural notion of the mercy of God. The scriptures every where represent the mercy of God as free and sovereign, and not that the exercises of it are necessary, so that God cannot bear justice should take place. The scriptures abundantly speak of it as the glory of the divine attribute of mercy, that it is free and sovereign in its exercises; and not that God cannot but deliver sinners from misery. This is a mean and most unworthy idea of the divine mercy.

It is most absurd also, as it is contrary to plain fact. For if there be any meaning in the objection, this is supposed in it, that all misery of the creature, whether just or unjust, is in itself contrary to the nature of God. For if his mercy be of such a nature, that a very great degree of misery, though just, is contrary to his nature; then it is only to add to the mercy, and then a less degree of misery is contrary to his nature; again to add further to it, and a still less degree of misery is contrary to his nature. And so the mercy of God being infinite, all misery must be contrary to his nature; which we see to be contrary to fact: for we see that God in his providence, doth indeed inflict very great calamities on mankind even in this life.

However strong such kind of objections against the eternal misery of the wicked, may seem to the carnal, senseless hearts of men, as though it were against God's justice and

mercy; yet their seeming strength arises from a want of sense of the infinite evil, odiousness, and provocation there is in sin. Hence it seems to us not suitable, that any poor creature should be the subject of such misery, because we have no sense of any thing abominable and provoking in any creature answerable to it. If we had, then this infinite calamity would not seem unsuitable. For one thing would but appear answerable and proportionable to another, and so the mind would rest in it as fit and suitable, and no more than what is proper to be ordered by the just, holy, and good Governor of the world.

That this is so, we may be convinced by this consideration, *viz.* that when we hear, or read of some horrid instances of cruelty, it may be to some poor innocent child, or some holy martyr—and their cruel persecutors, having no regard to their shrieks and cries, only sported themselves with their misery, and would not vouchsafe even to put an end to their lives—we have a sense of the evil of them and they make a deep impression on our minds. Hence is seems just, every way fit and suitable, that God should inflict a very terrible punishment on persons who have perpetrated such wickedness. It seems no way disagreeable to any perfection of the Judge of the world; we can think of it without being at all shocked. The reason is, that we have a sense of the evil of their conduct, and a sense of the proportion there is between the evil or demerit, and the punishment.

Just so, if we saw a proportion between the evil of sin and eternal punishment, if we saw something in wicked men that should appear as hateful to us, as eternal misery appears dreadful; something that should as much stir up indignation and detestation, as eternal misery does terror; all objections against this doctrine would vanish at once. Though now it seem incredible; though when we hear of it, and are so often told of it, we know not how to realize it; though when we hear of such a degree and duration of torments, as are held forth in this doctrine, and think what eternity is, it is ready to seem impossible, that such torments should be inflicted on poor feeble creatures by a Creator of infinite mercy; yet this arises principally from these two causes. (1.) It is so contrary to the depraved inclinations of mankind, that they hate to believe it, and cannot bear it should be true. (2.) They see not the suitableness of eternal punishment to the evil of sin; they see not that it is no more than proportionable to the demerit of sin.

Having thus shown, that the eternal punishment of the wicked is not inconsistent with the divine perfections, I shall now proceed to show, that it is so far from being inconsistent with the divine perfections, that those perfections evidently require it; *i. e.* they require that sin should have so great a punishment, either in the person who has committed it, or in a

surety; and therefore with respect to those who believe not in the surety, and have no interest in him, the divine perfections require that this punishment should be inflicted on them.

This appears, as it is not only not unsuitable that sin should be thus punished; but it is positively suitable, decent, and proper. If this be made to appear, that it is positively suitable that sin should be thus punished, then it will follow, that the perfections of God require it; for certainly the perfections of God require what is proper to be done. The perfection and excellency of God require, that to take place which is perfect, excellent, and proper in its own nature. But that sin should be punished eternally, is such a thing, which appears by the following considerations.

1. It is suitable that God should infinitely hate sin, and be an infinite enemy to it. Sin, as I have before shown, is an infinite evil, and, therefore, is infinitely odious and detestable. It is proper that God should hate every evil, and hate it according to its odious and detestable nature. And sin being infinitely evil and odious, it is proper that God should hate it infinitely.

2. If infinite hatred of sin be suitable to the divine character, then the *expressions* of such hatred are also suitable to his character. Because, that which is suitable to be, is suitable to be expressed: that which is lovely in itself, is lovely when it appears. If it be suitable that God should be an infinite enemy to sin, or that he should hate it infinitely, then it is suitable that he should *act* as such an enemy. If it be suitable that he should hate and have enmity against sin, then it is suitable for him to express that hatred and enmity in that to which hatred and enmity by its own nature tends. But certainly hatred, in its own nature, tends to opposition, and to set itself against that which is hated, and to procure its evil and not its good: and that in proportion to the hatred. Great hatred naturally tends to the great evil, and infinite hatred to the infinite evil of its object.

Whence it follows, that if it be suitable that there should be infinite hatred of sin in God, as I have shown it is, it is suitable that he should execute an infinite punishment on it; and so the perfections of God require that he should punish sin with an infinite, or which is the same thing, with an eternal punishment.

Thus we see not only the great objection against this doctrine answered, but the truth of the doctrine established by reason. I now proceed further to establish it by considering the remaining particulars under the doctrine.

II. That eternal death or punishment which God threatens to the wicked, is not annihilation, but an abiding, sensible

punishment or misery.—The truth of this proposition will appear by the following particulars.

1. The scripture every where represents the punishment of the wicked, as implying very extreme pains and sufferings; but a state of annihilation is no state of suffering at all. Persons annihilated have no sense or feeling of pain or pleasure, and much less do they feel that punishment which carries in it an *extreme* pain or suffering. They no more suffer to eternity than they did suffer from eternity.

2. It is agreeable both to scripture and reason to suppose, that the wicked will be punished in such a manner, that they shall be sensible of the punishment they are under; that they should be sensible that now God has executed and fulfilled what he threatened, what they disregarded, and would not believe. They should know themselves that justice takes place upon them; that God vindicates that majesty which they despised; that God is not so despicable a being as they thought him to be. They should be sensible for what they are punished, while they are under the threatened punishment. It is reasonable that they should be sensible of their own guilt, and should remember their former opportunities and obligations, and should see their own folly and God's justice.—If the punishment threatened be eternal annihilation, they will never know that it is inflicted; they will never know that God is just in their punishment, or that they have their deserts. And how is this agreeable to the scriptures, in which God threatens, that he will repay the wicked *to his face*, Deut. vii. 10. And to that in Job xxi. 19, 20. "God rewardeth him, and he shall know it; his eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty." And to that in Ezekiel xxii. 21, 22. "Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you."—And how is it agreeable to that expression so often annexed to the threatenings of God's wrath against wicked men, *And ye shall know that I am the Lord!*

3. The scripture teaches, that the wicked will suffer different *degrees* of torment, according to the different aggravations of their sins. Matt. v. 22. "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." Here Christ teaches us, that the torments of wicked men will be different in different persons, according to the different degrees of their guilt.—It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Tyre

and Sidon, than for the cities where most of Christ's mighty works were wrought.—Again, our Lord assures us, That he that knoweth his Lord's will, and prepareth not himself, nor doth according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knoweth not, and committeth things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.—These several passages of scripture infallibly prove, that there will be different degrees of punishment in hell; which is utterly inconsistent with the supposition, that the punishment consists in *annihilation*, in which there can be no *degrees*.

4. The scriptures are very express and abundant in this matter, That the eternal punishment of the wicked will consist in sensible misery and torment, and not in annihilation.—What is said of Judas is worthy to be observed here: "It had been good for that man if he had not been born;" Matt. xxvi. 24.—This seems plainly to teach us, that the punishment of the wicked is such that their existence, upon the whole, is worse than non-existence. But if their punishment consists merely in annihilation, this is not true.—The wicked, in their punishment, are said to *weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth*; which implies not only real existence, but life, knowledge, and activity, and that they are in a very sensible and exquisite manner affected with their punishment.—Isaiah xxxiii. 14. Sinners in the state of their punishment are represented to dwell with everlasting burnings. But if they are only turned into nothing, where is the foundation for this representation? It is absurd to say, that sinners will dwell with annihilation; for there is no dwelling in the case. It is also absurd to call annihilation a burning, which implies a state of existence sensibility, and extreme pain; whereas in annihilation there is neither.

It is said that they shall be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone. How can this expression with any propriety be understood to mean a state of annihilation? Yea, they are expressly said to have no rest day nor night, but to be tormented with fire and brimstone for ever and ever. Rev. xx. 10. But annihilation is a state of rest, a state in which not the least torment can possibly be suffered. The rich man in hell lifted up his eyes being in torment, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, and entered into a particular conversation with Abraham; all which proves that he was not annihilated.

The spirits of ungodly men before the resurrection are not in a state of annihilation, but in a state of misery; they are spirits in prison, as the apostle saith of them that were drowned in the flood, 1 Pet. iii. 19.—And this appears very plainly from the instance of the rich man before mentioned, if we consider him as representing the wicked in their separate state, between

death and the resurrection. But if the wicked even then, are in a state of torment, much more will they be, when they shall come to suffer that which is the proper punishment of their sins.

Annihilation is not so great a calamity but that some men have undoubtedly chosen it, rather than a state of of suffering even in this life. This was the case of Job, a good man. But if a good man in this world may suffer that which is worse than annihilation, doubtless the proper punishment of the wicked, in which God means to manifest his peculiar abhorrence of their wickedness, will be a calamity vastly greater still; and therefore cannot be annihilation. That must be a very mean and contemptible testimony of God's wrath towards those who have rebelled against his crown and dignity—broken his laws, and despised both his vengeance and his grace—which is not so great a calamity as some of his true children have suffered in life.

The eternal punishment of the wicked is said to be the *second death*, as Rev. xx. 14. and xxi. 8. It is doubtless called the second death in reference to the death of the body; and as the death of the body is ordinarily attended with great pain and distress, so the like, or something vastly greater, is implied in calling the eternal punishment of the wicked the *second death;* and there would be no propriety in calling it so, if it consisted merely in annihilation. And this second death wicked men will suffer; for it cannot be called the second death with respect to any other than men; it cannot be called so with respect to devils, as they die no temporal death, which is the first death. In Rev. ii. 11. it is said, "He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death;" implying, that all who do not overcome their lusts, but live in sin, shall suffer the second death.

Again, wicked men will suffer the same kind of death with the devils; as in verse 25th of the context, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Now the punishment of the devil is not annihilation, but torment: he therefore trembles for fear of it; not for fear of being annihilated,—he would be glad of that. What he is afraid of is torment, as appears by Luke viii. 28. where he cries out, and beseeches Christ that he would not torment him before the time. And it is said, Rev. xx. 10. "The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

It is strange how men will go directly against so plain and full revelations of scripture, as to suppose, notwithstanding all these things, that the eternal punishment threatened against the wicked, signifies no more than annihilation.

III. As the future punishment of the wicked consists in sensible misery; so it shall not only continue for a very long time, but shall be absolutely without end.

Of those who have held that the torments of hell are not absolutely eternal, there have been two sorts. Some suppose, that in the threatenings of everlasting punishment, the terms used do not necessarily import a proper eternity, but only a very long duration. Others suppose, that if they do import a proper eternity, yet we cannot necessarily conclude thence, that God will fulfil his threatenings. Therefore I shall,

First, Show that the threatenings of eternal punishment do very plainly and fully import a proper, absolute eternity, and not merely a long duration.—This appears,

1. Because when the scripture speaks of the wicked being sentenced to their punishment at the time when all temporal things are come to an end, it then speaks of it as everlasting, as in the text, and elsewhere. It is true, that the term for ever is not always in scripture used to signify eternity. Sometimes it means as long as a man liveth. In this sense it is said, that the Hebrew servant, who chose to abide with his master, should have his ear bored, and should serve his master for ever. Sometimes it means, during the continuance of the state and church of the Jews. In this sense, several laws, which were peculiar to that church, and were to continue in force no longer than that church should last, are called statutes for ever. See Exodus xxvii. 21. xxviii. 43, &c. Sometimes it means as long as the world stands. So in Eccles. i. 4. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever."

And this last is the longest temporal duration that such a term is ever used to signify. For the duration of the world is the longest of things temporal, as its beginning was the earliest. Therefore, when the scripture speaks of things as being before the foundation of the world, it means that they existed before the beginning of time. So those things which continue after the end of the world, are eternal things. When heaven and earth are shaken and removed, those things that remain will be what cannot be shaken, but will remain for ever, Heb. xii. 26, 27.

But the punishment of the wicked will not only remain after the end of the world, but is called everlasting, as in the text, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." So in 2 Thess. i. 9, 10. "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power when he shall come to be glorified in his saints," &c.—Now, what can be meant by a thing being everlasting *after* all temporal things are come to an end, but that it is absolutely without end?

2. Such expressions are used to set forth the duration of the punishment of the wicked, as are never used in the scriptures of the New Testament, to signify any thing but a proper eternity. It is said, not only that the punishment shall be for ever, but *for ever and ever.* Rev. xiv. 11. "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up *for ever and ever.*—Rev. xx. 10. "Shall be tormented day and night, *for ever and ever.*" Doubtless, the New Testament has some expression to signify a proper eternity, of which it has so often occasion to speak. But it has no higher expression than this: if this do not signify an absolute eternity, there is none that does.

3. The scripture uses the same way of speaking to set forth the eternity of *punishment* and the eternity of *happiness*, yea, the eternity of God himself. Matt. xxv. 46. "These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment: but the righteous into life *eternal.*" The words *everlasting* and *eternal*, in the original, are the very same. Rev. xxii. 5. "And they, (the saints) shall reign *for ever and ever.*" And the scripture has no higher expression to signify the eternity of God himself, than that of his being *for ever and ever;* as Rev. iv. 9. "To him who sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever;" and in the 10th verse, and in chap. v. 14, and chap. x. 6. and chap. xv. 7.

Again, the scripture expresses God's eternity by this, that it shall be *for ever*, after the world is come to an end; Psalm cii. 26, 27. "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."

4. The scripture says, that wicked men shall not be delivered, till they have paid the uttermost farthing of their debt; Matt. v. 26. The last mite; Luke x. 59; *i. e.* the utmost that is deserved; and all *mercy* is excluded by this expression. But we have shewn, that they *deserve* an infinite, an endless punishment.

5. The scripture says absolutely, that their punishment shall not have an end; Mark ix. 44. "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Now, it will not do to say, that the meaning is, Their worm shall live a *great while*, or that it shall be a great while before their fire is quenched. If ever the time comes, that their worm shall *die;* if ever there shall be a *quenching* of the fire at all, then it is not true that their worm *dieth not*, and that the fire is *not quenched.* For, if there be a dying of the worm, and a quenching of the fire, let it be at what time it will, nearer or further off, it is equally contrary to such a negation,—*it dieth not, it is not quenched.*

Secondly. There are others who allow, that the expressions of the threatenings do denote a proper eternity; but then, they say, it doth not certainly follow, that the punishment will really

be eternal; because, God may *threaten* and yet not *fulfil* his threatenings. Though they allow that the threatenings are positive and peremptory, without any reserve, yet they say, God is not obliged to fulfil absolute positive threatenings, as he is absolute promises. Because in promises, a right is conveyed, that the creature to whom the promises are made will claim; but there is no danger of the creature's claiming any right by a threatening. Therefore, I am now to show, That what God has positively declared in this matter, does indeed make it certain, that it shall be as he has declared. To this end, I shall mention two things:

1. It is evidently contrary to the divine *truth*, positively to declare any thing to be real, whether past, present, or to come, which God at the same time knows is not so. Absolutely threatening that any thing shall be, is the same as absolutely declaring that it is to be. For any to suppose, that God absolutely declares that any thing *will be*, which he at the same time knows *will not be*, is blasphemy, if there be any such thing as blasphemy.

Indeed, it is very true, that there is no *obligation* on God, arising from the claim of the creature, as there is in promises. They seem to reckon the wrong way, who suppose the necessity of the execution of the threatening to arise from a proper obligation on God to the creature, to execute consequent on his threatening. For, indeed, the certainty of the execution arises the other way, *viz.* on the obligation there was on the omniscient God, in threatening, to conform his threatening to what he knew would be future in execution. Though, strictly speaking, God is not properly *obliged* to the creature to execute because he has threatened, yet he was obliged not *absolutely* to threaten, if at the same time he knew that he should not, or would not fulfil: because this would not have been consistent with his truth. So that from the truth of God, there is an inviolable connexion between positive threatenings and execution. They who suppose that God positively declared, that he would do contrary to what he knew would come to pass, do therein suppose, that he absolutely threatened contrary to what he knew to be *truth*. And how any one can speak contrary to what he knows to be truth, in declaring, promising, or threatening, or any other way, consistently with inviolable truth, is inconceivable.

Threatenings are significations of something; and if they are made consistently with truth, they are true significations, or significations of truth, *that which shall be*. If absolute threatenings are significations of any thing, they are significations of the *futurity* of the things threatened. But if the futurity of the things threatened be not true and real, then how can the threatening be a *true* signification? And if God, in them, speaks con-

trary to what he *knows*, and contrary to what he *intends*, how he can speak true is inconceivable.

Absolute threatenings are a kind of *predictions;* and though God is not properly *obliged* by any claim of ours to fulfil predictions, unless they are of the nature of promises; yet it certainly would be contrary to *truth*, to predict that such a thing would come to pass, which he knew at the same time would not come to pass. Threatenings are declarations of something future, and they must be declarations of future truth, if they are true declarations. Its being future, alters not the case any more than if it were present. It is equally contrary to truth, to declare contrary to what at the same time is known to be truth, whether it be of things past, present, or to come: for all are alike to God.

Beside, we have often declarations in scripture of the future eternal punishment of the wicked, in the proper form of *predictions*, and not in the form of *threatenings*. So in the text, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." So in those frequent assertions of eternal punishment in the Revelation, some of which I have already quoted. The Revelation is a *prophecy*, and is so called in the book itself; so are those declarations of eternal punishment.—The like declarations we have also in many other places of scripture.

2. The doctrine of those who teach, that it is not certain that God will fulfil those absolute threatenings, is *blasphemous* another way; and that is, as God, according to their supposition, was obliged to make use of a *fallacy* to govern the world. They own, that it is needful that men should *apprehend* themselves liable to an eternal punishment, that they might thereby be restrained from sin, and that God has threatened such a punishment, for the very end that they might *believe* themselves exposed to it. But what an unworthy opinion does this convey of God and his government, of his infinite majesty, and wisdom, and all-sufficiency!—Beside, they suppose, that though God has made use of such a fallacy, yet it is not such an one but that they have *detected* him in it. Though God *intended* men should believe it to be certain, that sinners are liable to an eternal punishment; yet they suppose, that they have been so cunning as to find out that it is not certain: and so that God had not laid his design so deep, but that such cunning men as they can discern the cheat, and defeat the design: because they have found out, that there is no necessary connexion between the threatening of eternal punishment, and the execution of that threatening.

Considering these things, is it not greatly to be wondered at, that Archbishop Tillotson, who has made so great a figure among the new-fashioned divines, should advance such an opinion as this?

Before I conclude this head, it may be proper for me to answer an objection or two, that may arise in the minds of some.

1. It may be here said, We have instances wherein God hath not fulfilled his threatenings; as his threatening to Adam, and in him to mankind, that they should surely die, if they should eat the forbidden fruit. I answer, it is not true that God did not fulfil that threatening: he fulfilled it, and will fulfil it in every jot and tittle. When God said, "Thou shalt surely die," if we respect spiritual death, it was fulfilled in Adam's person in the day that he ate. For immediately his image, his holy spirit, and original righteousness, which was the highest and best life of our first parents, were lost; and they were immediately in a doleful state of spiritual death.

If we respect temporal death, that was also fulfilled: he brought death upon himself and all his posterity, and he virtually suffered that death on that very day on which he ate. His body was brought into a corruptible, mortal and dying condition, and so it continued till it was dissolved. If we look at all that death which was comprehended in the threatening, it was, properly speaking, fulfilled in Christ. When God said to Adam, If thou eatest, thou shalt die, he spake not only to him, and of him personally: but the words respected mankind, Adam and his race, and doubtless were so understood by him. His offspring were to be looked upon as sinning in him, and so should die with him. The words do as justly allow of an imputation of death as of sin; they are as well consistent with *dying* in a surety, as with *sinning* in one. Therefore the threatening is fulfilled in the death of Christ, the surety.

2. Another objection may arise from God's threatening to Nineveh. He threatened, that in forty days Nineveh should be destroyed, which yet he did not fulfil.—I answer, that threatening could justly be looked upon no otherwise than as *conditional*. It was of the nature of a *warning*, and not of an absolute denunciation. Why was Jonah sent to the Ninevites, but to give them warning, that they might have opportunity to repent, reform, and avert the approaching destruction? God had no other design or end in sending the prophet to them, but that they might be warned and tried by him, as God warned the Israelites, Judah, and Jerusalem, before their destruction. Therefore the prophets, together with their prophesies of approaching destruction, joined earnest exhortations to repent and reform, that it might be averted.

No more could justly be understood to be certainly threatened, than that Nineveh should be destroyed in forty days, *continuing as it was*. For it was for their wickedness that that destruction was threatened, and so the Ninevites took it. Therefore, when the cause was removed, the effect

ceased. It was contrary to God's known manner, to threaten punishment and destruction for sin in this world absolutely, so that it should come upon the persons threatened unavoidably, let them repent and reform and do what they would: Jer. xviii. 7, 8. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." So that all threatenings of this nature had a *condition* implied in them, according to the known had and declared manner of God's dealing. And the Ninevites did not take it as an *absolute* sentence or denunciation; if they had, they would have despaired of any benefit by fasting and reformation.

But the threatenings of eternal wrath are positive and absolute. There is nothing in the word of God from which we can gather any condition. The only opportunity of escaping is in this world; this is the only state of trial, wherein we have any offers of mercy, or place for repentance.

IV. I shall mention several good and important *ends*, which will be obtained by the eternal punishment of the wicked.

1. Hereby God vindicates his injured *majesty*. Wherein sinners cast contempt upon it, and trample it in the dust, God vindicates and honours it, and makes it appear, as it is indeed, infinite, by showing that it is infinitely dreadful to contemn or offend it.

2. God glorifies his *justice*.—The glory of God is the greatest good; it is that which is the chief end of the creation; it is of greater importance than any thing else. But this is one way wherein God will glorify himself, as in the eternal destruction of ungodly men he will glorify his justice. Therein he will appear as a just governor of the world. The vindictive justice of God will appear strict, exact, awful, and terrible, and therefore glorious.

3. God hereby indirectly glorifies his *grace* on the vessels of mercy.—The saints in heaven will behold the torments of the damned: "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." Isaiah lxvi. 24. "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." And in Rev. xiv. 10. it is said, that they shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. So they will be tormented in the presence also of the glorified saints.

Hereby the saints will be made the more sensible how great their salvation is. When they shall see how great the

misery is from which God hath saved them, and how great a difference he hath made between their state, and the state of others, who were by nature, and perhaps for a time by practice, no more sinful and ill-deserving than any, it will give them a greater sense of the wonderfulness of God's grace to them. Every time they look upon the damned, it will excite in them a lively and admiring sense of the grace of God, in making them so to differ. This the apostle informs us is one end of the damnation of ungodly men; Rom. ix. 22, 23. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known *the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy*, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" The view of the misery of the damned will double the ardour of the love and gratitude of the saints in heaven.

4. The sight of hell torments will exalt the happiness of the saints for ever. It will not only make them more sensible of the greatness and freeness of the grace of God in their happiness; but it will really make their happiness the greater, as it will make them the more sensible of their own happiness; it will give them a more lively relish of it; it will make them prize it more. When they see others, who were of the same nature, and born under the same circumstances, plunged in such misery, and they so distinguished, O it will make them sensible how happy they are. A sense of the opposite misery in all cases, greatly increases the relish of any joy or pleasure.

The sight of the wonderful power, the great and dreadful majesty, and awful justice and holiness of God, manifested in the eternal punishment of ungodly men, will make them prize his favour and love vastly the more; and they will be so much the more happy in the enjoyment of it.

APPLICATION.

1. From what hath been said, we may learn the folly and madness of the greater part of mankind, in that for the sake of present momentary gratification, they run the venture of enduring all these eternal torments. They prefer a small pleasure, or a little wealth, or a little earthly honour and greatness, which can last but for a moment, to an escape from this punishment. If it be true, that the torments of hell are eternal, what will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? What is there in this world, which is not a trifle, and lighter than vanity, in comparison with these eternal things?

How mad are men, who so often hear of these things, and pretend to believe them; who can live but a little while, a few

years; who do not even expect to live here longer than others of their species ordinarily do; and who yet are careless about what becomes of themselves in another world, where there is no change and no end! How mad are they, when they hear that if they go on in sin, they shall be eternally miserable, that they are not moved by it, but hear of it with as much carelessness and coldness, as if they were no way concerned in the matter; when they know not but that it may be their case, that they may be suffering these torments before a week is at an end!

How can men be so careless of such a matter as their own eternal and desperate destruction and torment! What a strange stupor and senselessness possesses the hearts of men! How common a thing is it to see men, who are told from sabbath to sabbath of eternal misery, and who are as mortal as other men, so careless about it, that they seem not to be at all restrained by it from whatever their souls lust after! It is not half so much their care to escape eternal misery, as it is to get money and land, and to be considerable in the world, and to gratify their senses. Their thoughts are much more exercised about these things, and much more of their care and concern is about them. Eternal misery, though they lie every day exposed to it, is a thing neglected, it is but now and then thought of, and then with a great deal of stupidity, and not with concern enough to stir them up to do any thing considerable, in order to escape it. They are not sensible that it is worth their while to take any considerable pains in order to it. And if they do take pains for a little while, they soon leave off, and something else takes up their thoughts and concern.

Thus you see it among young and old. Multitudes of youth lead a careless life, taking little care about their salvation. So you may see it among persons of middle age; and with many advanced in years, and when they certainly draw near to the grave. Yet these same persons will seem to acknowledge, that the greater part of men go to hell, and suffer eternal misery, and this through carelessness about it. However, they will do the same. How strange is it, that men can enjoy themselves, and be at rest, when they are thus hanging over eternal burnings; at the same time having no lease of their lives, and not knowing how soon the thread by which they hang will break, nor, indeed, do they pretend to know; and if it breaks, they are gone, they are lost for ever, and there is no remedy! Yet they trouble not themselves much about it; nor will they hearken to those who cry to them, and entreat them to take care for themselves, and labour to get out of that dangerous condition: they are not willing to take so much pains: they choose not to be diverted from amusing themselves with toys and vanities. Thus, well might the wise man say, Eccles. ix. 3. "The heart

of the sons of men is full of evil. Madness is in their heart while they live; and, after that, they go to the dead." How much wiser are those few, who make it their main business to lay a foundation for eternity, to secure their salvation!

2. I shall improve this subject in an use of exhortation to sinners, to take care to escape these eternal torments. If they be eternal, one would think that would be enough to awaken your concern, and excite your diligence. If the punishment be eternal, it is infinite, as we said before; and, therefore, no other evil, no death, no temporary torment, that ever you heard of, or that you can imagine, is any thing in comparison with it, but is as much less and less considerable, not only as a grain of sand is less than the whole universe, but as it is less than the boundless space which encompasses the universe. Therefore here,

(1.) Be entreated to consider attentively how great and awful a thing eternity is. Although you cannot comprehend it the more by considering, yet you may be made more sensible that it is not a thing to be disregarded. Do but consider what it is to suffer extreme torment for ever and ever; to suffer it day and night, from one year to another, from one age to another, and from one thousand ages to another, and so adding age to age, and thousands to thousands, in pain, in wailing and lamenting, groaning and shrieking, and gnashing your teeth; with your souls full of dreadful grief and amazement, with your bodies, and every member full of racking torture, without any possibility of getting ease; without any possibility of moving God to pity by your cries; without any possibility of hiding yourselves from him; without any possibility of diverting your thoughts from your pain; without any possibility of obtaining any manner of mitigation, or help, or change for the better.

(2.) Do but consider how dreadful despair will be in such torment. How dismal will it be, when you are under these racking torments, to know assuredly that you never, never shall be delivered from them; to have no hope: when you shall wish that you might but be turned into nothing, but shall have no hope of it; when you shall wish that you might be turned into a toad or a serpent, but shall have no hope of it; when you would rejoice, if you might but have any relief, after you shall have endured these torments millions of ages, but shall have no hope of it. After you shall have worn out the age of the sun, moon, and stars, in your dolorous groans and lamentations, without rest day and night, or one minute's ease, yet you shall have no hope of ever being delivered; after you shall have worn out a thousand more such ages, you shall have no hope, but shall know that you are not one whit nearer to the end of your torments; but that still there are the same groans,

the same shrieks, the same doleful cries, incessantly to be made by you, and that the smoke of your torment shall still ascend up for ever and ever. Your souls, which shall have been agitated with the wrath of God all this while will still exist to bear more wrath; your bodies which shall have been burning all this while in these glowing flames, shall not have been consumed, but will remain to roast through eternity, which will not have been at all shortened by what shall have been past.

You may by considering make yourselves more sensible than you ordinarily are; but it is a little you can conceive of what it is to have no hope in such torments. How sinking would it be to you, to endure such pain as you have felt in this world, without any hopes, and to know that you never should be delivered from it, nor have one minute's rest! You can now scarcely conceive how doleful that would be. How much more to endure the vast weight of the wrath of God without hope! The more the damned in hell think of the eternity of their torments, the more amazing will it appear to them; and alas! they will not be able to keep it out of their minds. Their tortures will not divert them from it, but will fix their attention to it. O how dreadful will eternity appear to them after they shall have been thinking on it for ages together, and shall have so long an experience of their torments! The damned in hell will have two infinites perpetually to amaze them, and swallow them up; One is an infinite God, whose wrath they will bear, and in whom they will behold their perfect and irreconcilable enemy. The other is the infinite duration of their torment.

If it were possible for the damned in hell to have a comprehensive knowledge of eternity, their sorrow and grief would be infinite in degree. The comprehensive view of so much sorrow, which they must endure, would cause infinite grief for the present. Though they will not have a comprehensive knowledge of it yet they will doubtless have a vastly more lively and strong apprehension of it than we can have in this world. Their torments will give them an impression of it.—A man in his present state, without any enlargement of his capacity, would have a vastly more lively impression of eternity than he has, if he were only under some pretty sharp pain in some member of his body, and were at the same time assured, that he must endure that pain for ever. His pain would give him a greater sense of eternity than other men have. How much more will those excruciating torments which the damned will suffer, have this effect!

Besides, their capacity will probably be enlarged, their understandings will be quicker and stronger in a future state; and God can give them as great a sense and as strong an impression of eternity, as he pleases, to increase their grief and torment.—O be entreated, ye that are in a Christless state, and

are going on in a way to hell; that are daily exposed to damnation, to consider these things. If you do not, it will surely be but a little while before you will experience them, and then you will know how dreadful it is to despair in hell; and it may be before this year, or this month, or this week, is at an end; before another sabbath, or ever you shall have opportunity to hear another sermon.

(3.) That you may effectually escape these dreadful and eternal torments, be entreated to flee and embrace him who came into the world for the very end of saving sinners from these torments, who has paid the whole debt due to the divine law, and exhausted eternal in temporal sufferings. What great encouragement is it to those of you who are sensible that you are exposed to eternal punishment, that there is a Saviour provided, who is able and who freely offers to save you from that punishment, and that in a way which is perfectly consistent with the glory of God, yea, which is more to the glory of God than it would be if you should suffer the eternal punishment of hell. For if you should suffer that punishment, you would never pay the whole of the debt. Those who are sent to hell never will have paid the whole of the debt which they owe to God, nor indeed a part which bears any proportion to the whole. They never will have paid a part which bears so great a proportion to the whole, as one mite to ten thousand talents. Justice therefore never can be actually satisfied in your damnation; but it is actually satisfied in Christ. Therefore he is accepted of the Father, and therefore all who believe are accepted and justified in him. Therefore believe in him, come to him, commit your souls to him to be saved by him. In him you shall be safe from the eternal torments of hell. Nor is that all: but through him you shall inherit inconceivable blessedness and glory, which will be of equal duration with the torments of hell. For, as at the last day the wicked shall go away into *everlasting* punishment, so shall the righteous, or those who trust in Christ, go into life *eternal*.

SERMON XII.*

THE PEACE WHICH CHRIST GIVES HIS TRUE FOLLOWERS.

JOHN XIV. 27.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.

THESE words are a part of a most affectionate and affecting discourse that Christ had with his disciples the same evening in which he was betrayed, knowing that he was to be crucified the next day. This discourse begins with the 31st verse of the 13th, and is continued to the end of the 16th chapter. Christ began his discourse after he partook of the passover with them, after he had instituted and administered the sacrament of the supper, and after Judas was gone out, and none were left but his true and faithful disciples; whom he now addresses as his dear children. This was the last discourse that Christ had with them before his death. As it was his parting discourse, and, as it were his dying discourse, so it is on many accounts the most remarkable we have recorded in our Bibles.

It is evident this discourse made a deep impression on the minds of the disciples; and we may suppose that it did so, in a special manner, on the mind of John the beloved disciple, whose heart was especially full of love to him, and who had just then been leaning on his bosom. In this discourse Christ had told his dear disciples that he was going away, which filled them with sorrow and heaviness. The words of the text are given to comfort them, and to relieve their sorrow. He supports them with the promise of that peace which he would leave with them, and which they would have in him and with him, when he was gone.

* Dated, August 1750.

This promise he delivers in three emphatical expressions which illustrate one another. "Peace I leave with you." As much as to say, though I am going away, yet I will not take all comfort away with me. While I have been with you, I have been your support and comfort, and you have had peace in me in the midst of the losses you have sustained, and troubles you have met with from this evil generation. This peace I will not take from you, but leave it with you in a more full possession.

"My peace I give unto you." Christ by calling it his peace, signifies two things.

1. That it was his *own*, that which he had to give. It was the peculiar benefit that he had to bestow on his children, now he was about to leave the world as to his human presence. Silver and gold he had none: for, while in his state of humiliation he was poor. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests: but the Son of man had not where to lay his head: Luke ix. 58. He had no earthly estate to leave to his disciples, who were as it were his family: but he had *peace* to give them.

2. It was *his* peace that he gave them; as it was the *same kind* of peace which he himself enjoyed. The same excellent and divine peace which he ever had in God, and which he was about to receive in his exalted state in a vastly greater perfection and fulness: for the happiness Christ gives to his people, is a participation of his own happiness: agreeable to chapter xv. 11. "These things have I said unto you, that my joy might remain in you." And in his prayer with his disciples at the conclusion of this discourse, chapter xvii. 13. "And now come I to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." And verse 22. "And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them."

Christ here alludes to men making their wills before death. When parents are about to leave their children by death, they are wont in their last will and testament to give them their estate; that estate which they themselves were wont to possess and enjoy. So it was with Christ when he was about to leave the world, with respect to the peace which he gave his disciples; only with this difference, that earthly parents, when they die, though they leave the same estate to their children which they themselves heretofore enjoyed; yet when the children come to the full possession of it, they enjoy it no more; the parents do not enjoy it with their children. The time of the full possession of parents and children is not together. Whereas with respect to Christ's peace, he did not only possess it himself before his death, when he bequeathed it to his disciples; but also

afterwards more fully: so that they were received to possess it with him.

The third and last expression is, "*not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*" Which is as much as to say, my gifts and legacies, now I am going to leave the world, are not like those which the rich and great men of the world are wont to leave to their heirs when they die. They bequeath to their children their worldly possessions; and it may be, vast treasures of silver and gold, and sometimes an earthly kingdom. But the thing that I give you, is my peace, a vastly different thing from what they are wont to give, and which cannot be obtained by all that they can bestow, or their children inherit from them.

DOCTRINE.

That peace which Christ, when he died, left as a legacy to all his true saints, is very different from all those things which the men of this world bequeath to their children, when they die.

I. Christ at his death made over the blessings of the new covenant to believers, as it were in a will or testament.

II. A great blessing that Christ made over to believers in this his testament was his peace.

III. This legacy of Christ is exceedingly diverse from all that any of the men of this world ever leave to their children when they die.

I. Christ at his death made over the blessings of the new covenant to believers, as it were in a will or testament.

The new covenant is represented by the apostle as Christ's last will and testament. Heb. ix. 15. 16. "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." What men convey by their will or testament, is their own estate. So Christ in the new covenant conveys to believers his own inheritance, so far as they are capable of possessing and enjoying it. They have that eternal life given to them in their measure, which Christ himself possesses. They live in him, and with him, and by a participation of his life. *Because he lives, they live also.* They inherit his kingdom: the same kingdom which the Father appointed unto him. Luke xxii. 29. "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as

my Father hath appointed unto me." They shall reign on his throne, Rev. iii. 21. They have his glory given to them. John xvii. And because all things are Christ's, so in Christ all things are the saints', 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.

Men in their wills or testaments most commonly give their estates to their children: so believers are in scripture represented as Christ's children. Heb. ii. 13. "Behold, I, and the children which God hath given me." Men most commonly make their wills a little before their death: so Christ did, in a very special and solemn manner, make over and confirm to his disciples the blessings of the new covenant, on the evening before the day of his crucifixion, in that discourse of which my text is a part. The promises of the new covenant were never so particularly expressed, and so solemnly given forth by Christ in all the time that he was upon earth, as in this discourse. Christ promises them mansions in his Father's house, chapter xiv. 1, 2, 3. Here he promises them whatever blessings they should need and ask in his name. Chapter xv. 7. xvi. 23, 24. Here he more solemnly and fully than any where else, gives forth and confirms the promise of the Holy Spirit, which is the sum of the blessings of the covenant of grace. Chap. xiv. 18. xvii. 26. xv. 25. xvi. 7. Here he promises them his own and his Father's gracious presence and favour. Chapter xiv. 18. xix. 20, 21. Here he promises them *peace*, as in the text. Here he promises them his joy. Chapter xv. 11. Here he promises grace to bring forth holy fruits. Chapter xv. 16. And victory over the world. Chapter xvi. 33. And indeed there seems to be no where else so full and complete an edition of the covenant of grace in the whole Bible, as in this dying discourse of Christ with his eleven true disciples.

This covenant between Christ and his children is like a will or testament also in this respect, that it becomes effectual, and a way is made for putting it in execution no other way than by his death; as the apostle observes, it is with a will or testament among men. "For a testament is of force after men are dead." Heb. ix. 17. For though the covenant of grace indeed was of force before the death of Christ, yet it was of force no otherwise than by his death: so that his death then did virtually intervene; being already undertaken and engaged. As a man's heirs come by the legacies bequeathed to them no otherwise than by the death of the testator, so men come by the spiritual and eternal inheritance no otherwise than by the death of Christ. If it had not been for the death of Christ they never could have obtained it.

II. A great blessing that Christ in his testament hath bequeathed to his true followers, is *his peace*. Here are two

things that I would observe particularly, *viz.* That Christ hath bequeathed to believers true peace; and then, that the peace he has given them is *his* peace.

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ has bequeathed true peace and comfort to his followers. Christ is called the Prince of Peace. Isaiah ix. 6. And when he was born into the world, the angels on that joyful and wonderful occasion sang, Glory to God in the highest, on earth *peace;* because of that peace which he should procure for, and bestow on the children of men; peace with God, and peace one with another, and tranquillity and peace within themselves: which last is especially the benefit spoken of in the text. This Christ has procured for his followers, and laid a foundation for their enjoyment of it, in that he has procured for them the other two, *viz.* peace with God, and one with another. He has procured for them peace and reconciliation with God, and his favour and friendship; in that he satisfied for their sins, and laid a foundation for the perfect removal of the guilt of sin, and the forgiveness of all their trespasses, and wrought out for them a perfect and glorious righteousness, most acceptable to God, and sufficient to recommend them to God's full acceptance, to the adoption of children, and to the eternal fruits of his fatherly kindness.

By these means true saints are brought into a state of freedom from condemnation, and all the curses of the law of God. Rom. viii. 34. "Who is he that condemneth?" And by these means they are safe from that dreadful and eternal misery to which naturally they are exposed, and are set on high out of the reach of all their enemies, so that the gates of hell and powers of darkness can never destroy them; nor can wicked men, though they may persecute, ever hurt them. Rom. viii. 31. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Numb. xxiii. 8. "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed." Verse 23. "There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." By these means they are out of the reach of death, John vi. 4. ix. 50, 51. "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." By these means, death with respect to them has lost its sting, and is no more worthy of the name of death. 1 Cor. xv. 55. "O death, where is thy sting?" By these means they have no need to be afraid of the day of judgment, when the heavens and earth shall be dissolved. Psalm xlvi. 1, 2. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed: and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Yea, a true saint has reason to be at rest in an assurance, that nothing can separate him from the love of God. Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Thus he that is in Christ is in a safe refuge from every thing that might disturb him; Isa. xxxii. 2. "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." "And hence they that dwell in Christ have that promise fulfilled to them which we have in the 18th verse of the same chapter: "And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

And the true followers of Christ have not only ground of rest and peace of soul, by reason of their safety from evil, but on account of their sure title and certain enjoyment of all that good which they stand in need of, living, dying, and through all eternity. They are on a sure foundation for happiness, are built on a rock that can never be moved, and have a fountain that is sufficient, and can never be exhausted. The covenant is ordered in all things and sure, and God has passed his word and oath, "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." The infinite Jehovah is become their God, who can do every thing for them. He is their portion who has an infinite fulness of good in himself. "He is their shield and exceeding great reward." As *great* a good is made over to them as they can desire or conceive of; and is made as *sure* as they can desire: Therefore they have reason to put their hearts at rest, and be at peace in their minds.

Besides, he has bequeathed peace to the souls of his people, as he has procured for them and made over to them, the spirit of grace and true holiness; which has a natural tendency to the peace and quietness of the soul. It implies a discovery and relish of a suitable and sufficient good. It brings a person into a view of divine beauty, and to a relish of that good which is a man's proper happiness; and so it brings the soul to its true centre. The soul by this means is brought to rest, and ceases from restlessly inquiring, as others do, who will show us any good; and wandering to and fro, like lost sheep seeking rest, and finding none. The soul hath found him who is the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, and sits down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto his taste. Cant. ii. 2. And thus that saying of Christ is fulfilled, John iv. 14. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." And besides, true grace naturally tends to peace and quietness, as it settles things in the soul in their due order, sets reason on the throne, and subjects the senses and affections to its government, which before were uppermost. Grace tends to tranquillity, as it mortifies tumultu-

ous desires and passions, subdues the eager and insatiable appetites of the sensual nature and greediness after the vanities of the world. It mortifies such principles as hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, envyings, and the like, which are a continual source of inward uneasiness and perturbation; and supplies those sweet, calming, and quieting principles of humility, meekness, resignation, patience, gentleness, forgiveness, and sweet reliance on God. It also tends to peace, as it fixes the aim of the soul to a certain end; so that the soul is no longer distracted and drawn by opposite ends to be sought, and opposite portions to be obtained, and many masters of contrary wills and commands to be served; but the heart is fixed in the choice of one certain, sufficient, and unfailing good: and the soul's aim at this, and hope of it, is like an anchor that keeps it steadfast, that it should no more be driven to and fro by every wind.

2. This peace which Christ has left as a legacy to his true followers, is his peace. It is the peace which himself enjoys. This is what I take to be principally intended in the expression. It is the peace that he enjoyed while on earth, in his state of humiliation. Though he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and was every where hated and persecuted by men and devils, and had no place of rest in this world: yet in God, his Father, he had peace. We read of his rejoicing in spirit, Luke x. 21. So Christ's true disciples, though in the world they have tribulation, yet in God have peace.

When Christ had finished his labours and sufferings, had risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, he entered into his rest, a state of most blessed, perfect, and everlasting peace: delivered by his own sufferings from our imputed guilt, acquitted and justified of the Father on his resurrection. Having obtained a perfect victory over all his enemies, he was received of his Father into heaven, the rest which he had prepared for him, there to enjoy his heart's desire fully and perfectly to all eternity. And then were those words in the six verses of the 21st Psalm, which have respect to Christ, fulfilled. This peace and rest of the Messiah is exceeding glorious. Isaiah xi. 10. "And his rest shall be glorious." This rest is what Christ has procured, not only for himself, but also his people, by his death; and he hath bequeathed it to them, that they may enjoy it with him, imperfectly in this, and perfectly and eternally in another world.

That peace, which has been described, and which believers enjoy, is a participation of the peace which their glorious Lord and Master himself enjoys, by virtue of the same blood by which Christ himself has entered into rest. It is in a participation of this same justification: for believers are justified

with Christ. As he was justified when he rose from the dead, and as he was made free from our guilt, which he had as our surety, so believers are justified in him and through him; as being accepted of God in the same righteousness. It is in the favour of the same God and heavenly Father that they enjoy peace. "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." It is in a participation of the same spirit; for believers have the spirit of Christ. He had the spirit given to him not by measure, and of his fulness do they all receive, and grace for grace. As the oil poured on the head of Aaron went down to the skirts of his garments, so the spirit poured on Christ, the head, descends to all his members. It is as partaking of the same grace of the spirit that believers enjoy this peace; John i. 16.

It is as being united to Christ, and living by a participation of his life, as a branch lives by the life of the vine. It is as partaking of the same love of God; John xvii. 26. "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them."—It is as having a part with him in his victory over the same enemies: and also as having an interest in the same kind of eternal rest, and peace. Eph. ii. 5, 6. "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.—and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places."

III. This legacy of Christ to his true disciples is very different from all that the men of this world ever leave to their children when they die. The men of this world many of them, when they come to die, have great estates to bequeath to their children, an abundance of the good things of this world, large tracts of ground, perhaps in a fruitful soil, covered with flocks and herds. They sometimes leave to their children stately mansions, and vast treasures of silver, gold, jewels, and precious things, fetched from both the Indies, and from every side of the globe. They leave them wherewith to live in much state and magnificence, and make a great show among men, to fare very sumptuously, and swim in worldly pleasures. Some have crowns, sceptres, and palaces, and great monarchies to leave to their heirs. But none of these things are to be compared to that blessed peace of Christ which he hath bequeathed to his true followers. These things are such as God commonly in his providence gives his worst enemies, those whom he hates and despises most. But Christ's peace is a precious benefit, which he reserves for his peculiar favourites. These worldly things, even the best of them, that the men and princes of the world leave for their children, are things which God in his providence throws out to those whom he looks on as dogs; but Christ's peace is the bread of his children. All these earthly things are

but empty shadows, which, however men set their hearts upon them, are not bread, and never can satisfy their souls; but this peace of Christ is a truly substantial satisfying food. Isaiah lv. 2. None of those things, if men have them to the best advantage, and in ever so great abundance, can give true peace and rest to the soul, as is abundantly manifest not only in reason, but experience; it being found in all ages, that those who have the most of them, have commonly the least quietness of mind. It is true, there may be a kind of quietness, a false peace, in the enjoyment of worldly things; men may bless their souls, and think themselves the only happy persons, and despise others: may say to their souls, as the rich man did, Luke xii. 19. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But Christ's peace, which he gives to his true disciples, differs from this peace that men may have in the enjoyments of the world, in the following respects:

1. Christ's peace is a *reasonable* peace and rest of soul; it is what has its foundation in light and knowledge, in the proper exercises of reason, and a right view of things; whereas the peace of the world is founded in blindness and delusion. The peace that the people of Christ have, arises from their having their eyes open, and seeing things as they are. The more they consider, and the more they know of the truth and reality of things—the more they know what is true concerning themselves, the state and condition they are in; the more they know of God and what manner of being he is; the more certain they are of another world and future judgment, and of the truth of God's threatenings and promises; the more their consciences are awakened and enlightened, and the brighter and the more searching the light—the more is their peace established. Whereas, on the contrary, the peace that the men of the world have in their worldly enjoyments can subsist no otherwise than by their being kept in ignorance. They must be blindfolded and deceived, otherwise they can have no peace: do but let light in upon their consciences, so that they may look about them, and see what they are, and what circumstances they are in, and it will at once destroy all their quietness and comfort. Their peace can live no where but in the dark. Light turns their ease into torment. The more they know what is true concerning God and concerning themselves, the more they are sensible of the truth concerning those enjoyments which they possess: and the more they are sensible what things now are, and what things are like to be hereafter, the more will their calm be turned into a storm. The worldly man's peace cannot be maintained but by avoiding consideration and reflection. If he allows himself to think, and properly to exercise his reason, it destroys his quietness and comfort. If he would establish his

carnal peace, it concerns him to put out the light of his mind, and turn beast as fast as he can. The faculty of reason, if at liberty, proves a mortal enemy to his peace. It concerns him, if he would keep alive his peace, to stupify his mind and deceive himself, and to imagine things to be otherwise than they are. But with respect to the peace which Christ gives, reason is its great friend. The more this faculty is exercised, the more it is established. The more they consider and view things with truth and exactness, the firmer is their comfort and the higher their joy. How vast a difference then is there between the peace of a Christian and the worldling! How miserable are they who cannot enjoy peace any otherwise than by hiding their eyes from the light, and confining themselves to darkness. Their peace is stupidity; it is as the ease that a man has who has taken a dose of stupifying poison, the ease and pleasure that a drunkard may have in a house on fire over his head, or the joy of a distracted man in thinking that he is a king, though a miserable wretch confined in bedlam. Whereas the peace that Christ gives his true disciples is the light of life, something of the tranquillity of heaven, the peace of the celestial paradise that has the glory of God to lighten it.

2. Christ's peace is a virtuous and holy peace. The peace that the men of the world enjoy is vicious; it is vile, depraves and debases the mind, and makes men brutish. But the peace that the saints enjoy in Christ, is not only their comfort, but it is a part of their beauty and dignity. The Christian tranquillity, rest, and joy of real saints, are not only unspeakable privileges, but they are virtues and graces of God's Spirit, wherein his image partly consists. This peace has its source in those principles which are in the highest degree virtuous and amiable, such as poverty of spirit, holy resignation, trust in God, divine love, meekness, and charity; the exercise of the blessed fruits of the Spirit: Gal. v. 22, 23.

3. This peace greatly differs from that which is enjoyed by the men of the world, with regard to its exquisite sweetness. It is a peace so much above all that natural men enjoy in worldly things, that it surpasses their understanding and conception. Phil. iv. 7. It is exquisitely sweet and secure, because it has so firm a foundation, the everlasting rock that never can be moved; because perfectly agreeable to reason; because it rises from holy and divine principles, that, as they are the virtue, so are they the proper happiness of men; and because the greatness of the objective good that the saints enjoy, is no other than the infinite bounty and fulness of that God who is the fountain of all good. The fulness and perfection of that provision that is made in Christ and the new covenant, is a foundation laid for the saints' perfect peace; and this hereafter they shall actually enjoy. And though their peace is not

now perfect, it is not owing to any defect in the provision made, but to their own imperfection, sin and darkness. As yet, they partly cleave to the world, and seek peace from thence, and do not perfectly cleave to Christ. But the more they do so, and the more they see of the provision made, and accept of it, and cleave to that alone, the nearer are they brought to perfect tranquillity. Isaiah xxvi. 5.

4. The peace of the Christian infinitely differs from that of the worldling, in that it is unfailing and eternal. That peace which carnal men have in the things of the world, is, according to the foundation upon which it is built, of short continuance; like the comfort of a dream, 1 John ii. 1 Cor. vii. 31. These things, the best and most durable of them, are like bubbles on the face of the water; they vanish in a moment. Hos. x. 7.—But the foundation of the Christian's peace is everlasting: it is what no time, no change, can destroy. It will remain when the body dies: it will remain when the mountains depart and the hills shall be removed, and when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll. The fountain of his comfort shall never be diminished, and the stream shall never be dried. His comfort and joy is a living spring in the soul, a well of water springing up to everlasting life.

APPLICATION.

The use that I would make of this doctrine, is to improve it as an inducement unto all to forsake the world, no longer seeking peace and rest in its vanities, and to cleave to Christ and follow him. Happiness and rest are what all men pursue. But the things of the world, wherein most men seek it, can never afford it; they are labouring and spending themselves in vain. But Christ invites you to come to him, and offers you this peace, which he gives his true followers, and that so much excels all that the world can afford. Is. lv. 2, 3.

You that have hitherto spent your time in the pursuit of satisfaction in the profit or glory of the world, or in the pleasures and vanities of youth, have this day an offer of that excellent and everlasting peace and blessedness, which Christ has purchased with the price of his own blood. As long as you continue to reject those offers and invitations of Christ, and continue in a Christless condition, you never will enjoy any true peace or comfort; but will be like the prodigal, that in vain endeavoured to be satisfied with the husks that the swine did eat. The wrath of God will abide upon, and misery will attend you, wherever you go, which you never will be able to escape. Christ gives peace to the most sinful and miserable that come to him. He heals the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. But it is impossible that they should have peace,

while they continue in their sins. Isaiah lvii. 19, 20, 21. There is no peace between God and them; for, as they have the guilt of sin remaining in their souls, and are under its dominion, so God's indignation continually burns against them, and therefore they travail in pain all their days. While you continue in such a state, you live in dreadful uncertainty what will become of you, and in continual danger. When you are in the enjoyment of things most pleasing to you, where your heart is best suited, and most cheerful, yet you are in a state of condemnation. You hang over the infernal pit, with the sword of divine vengeance hanging over your head, having no security one moment from utter and remediless destruction. What reasonable peace can any one enjoy in such a state as this. What though you clothe him in gorgeous apparel, or set him on a throne, or at a prince's table and feed him with the rarest dainties the earth affords: how miserable is the ease and cheerfulness that such have! what a poor kind of comfort and joy is it that such take in their wealth and pleasures for a moment, while they are the prisoners of divine justice, and wretched captives of the devil! They have none to befriend them, being without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world!

I invite you now to a better portion. There are better things provided for the sinful, miserable children of men. There is a surer comfort and more durable peace: comfort that you may enjoy in a state of safety, and on a sure foundation: a peace and rest that you may enjoy with reason, and with your eyes open. You may have all your sins forgiven, your greatest and most aggravated transgressions blotted out as a cloud, and buried as in the depths of the sea, that they never may be found more. And being not only forgiven, but accepted to favour, you become the objects of God's complacency and delight; being taken into God's family, and made his children, you may have good evidence that your names were written on the heart of Christ before the world was made, and that you have an interest in that covenant of grace that is well ordered in all things and sure; wherein is promised no less than life and immortality, an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Being in such circumstances, nothing shall be able to prevent your being happy to all eternity; having for the foundation of your hope, that love of God which is from eternity to eternity: and his promise and oath, and his omnipotent power, things infinitely firmer than mountains of brass. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, yea, the heavens shall vanish away, like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, yet these things will never be abolished.

In such a state as this you will have a foundation of peace and rest through all changes, and in times of the greatest uproar and outward calamity be defended from all storms, and dwell above the floods; Psalm xxxii. 6, 7. And you shall be at peace with every thing, and God will make all his creatures throughout all parts of his dominion, to befriend you; Job v. 19, 24.—You need not be afraid of any thing that your enemies can do unto you; Psalm iii. 5, 6. Those things that are now most terrible to you, *viz.* death, judgment, and eternity, will then be most comfortable, the most sweet and pleasant objects of your contemplation; at least there will be reason that they should be so. Hearken therefore to the friendly counsel that is given you this day, turn your feet into the way of peace, forsake the foolish and live; forsake those things which are no other than the devil's baits, and seek after this excellent peace and rest of Jesus Christ, that peace of God which passeth all understanding. Taste and see; never was any disappointed that made a trial. Prov. xxiv. 13, 14. You will not only find those spiritual comforts that Christ offers you to be of a surpassing sweetness for the present, but they will be to your soul as the dawning light that shines more and more to the perfect day; and the issue of all will be your arrival in heaven, that land of rest, those regions of everlasting joy, where your peace and happiness will be perfect, without the least mixture of trouble or affliction, and never be interrupted nor have an end.

SERMON XIII.*

THE PERPETUITY AND CHANGE OF THE SABBATH.

1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

We find in the New Testament often mentioned a certain collection, which was made by the Grecian churches, for the brethren in Judea, who were reduced to pinching want by a dearth which then prevailed, and was the heavier upon them by reason of their circumstances, they having been from the beginning oppressed and persecuted by the unbelieving Jews. This collection or contribution is twice mentioned in the Acts, chap. xi. 21—31. and xxiv. 17. It is also noticed in several of the epistles; as Rom. xv. 26. and Gal. ii. 10. But it is most largely insisted on, in these two epistles to the Corinthians; in this first epistle, chap. xvi. and in the second epistle, chap. viii. and ix.—The apostle begins the directions, which in this place he delivers concerning this matter, with the words of the text: —wherein we may observe,

1. What is the thing to be done concerning which the apostle gives them direction,—the exercise and manifestation of their charity towards their brethren, by communicating to them, for the supply of their wants; which was by Christ and his apostles often insisted on, as one main duty of the Christian religion, and is expressly declared to be so by the apostle James, chapter i. 27. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

* Not dated.

2. We may observe the *time* on which the apostle directs that this should be done, *viz.* "on the first day of the week." By the inspiration of the holy Ghost he insists upon it, that it be done on such a particular day of the week, as if no other day would do so well as that, or were so proper and fit a time for such a work.—Thus, although the inspired apostle was not for making that distinction of days in gospel-times, which the Jews made, as appears by Gal. iv. 10. "Ye observe days, and months," yet, here he gives the preference to one day of the week, before any other, for the performance of a certain great duty of Christianity.

3. It may be observed, that the apostle had given to *other* churches, that were concerned in the same duty, to do it on the first day of the week: "As I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye." Whence we may learn, that it was nothing peculiar in the circumstances of the Christians at Corinth, which was the reason why the Holy Ghost insisted that they should perform this duty *on this day* of the week. The apostle had given the like orders to the churches of Galatia.

Now Galatia was far distant from Corinth; the sea parted them, and there were several other countries between them. Therefore it cannot be thought that the Holy Ghost directs them to this time upon any *secular* account, having respect to some particular circumstances of the people in that city, but upon a *religious* account. In giving the preference to this day for such work, before any other day, he has respect to something which reached all Christians throughout the wide world.

And by other pasages of the New Testament, we learn that the case was the same as to other exercises of religion; and that the first day of the week was preferred before any other day, in churches immediately under the care of the apostles, for an attendance on the exercises of religion in general. Acts xx. 7. "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." It seems by these things to have been among the primitive Christians in the apostles' days, with respect to the first day of the week, as it was among the Jews, with respect to the seventh.

We are taught by Christ, that the doing of alms and showing of mercy are proper works for the sabbath-day. When the Pharisees found fault with Christ for suffering his disciples to pluck the ears of corn, and eat on the sabbath, Christ corrects them with that saying, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice;" Matt. xii. 7. And Christ teaches that works of mercy are proper to be done on the sabbath, Luke xiii. 15, 16. and xiv. 5.—These works used to be done on sacred festivals,

and days of rejoicing, under the Old Testament, as in Nehemiah's and Esther's time; Neh. viii. 10. and Esth. ix. 19, 22. And Josephus and Philo, two very noted Jews, who wrote not long after Christ's time, gave an account that it was the manner among the Jews on the Sabbath, to make collections for sacred and pious uses.

DOCTRINE.

It is the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be especially set apart among Christians, for religious exercises and duties.

That this is the doctrine which the Holy Ghost intended to teach us, by this and some other passages of the New Testament, I hope will appear plainly by the sequel. This is a doctrine, that we have been generally brought up in by the instructions and examples of our ancestors; and it has been the general profession of the Christian world, that this day ought to be religiously observed and distinguished from other days of the week. However, some deny it. Some refuse to take notice of the day, as different from other days. Others own, that it is a laudable custom of the Christian church, into which she fell by agreement, and by appointment of her ordinary rulers, to set apart this day for public worship. But they deny any other original to such an observation of the day, than prudential human appointment. Others religiously observe the Jewish sabbath, as of perpetual obligation, and that we want a foundation for determining that this is abrogated, and another day of the week is appointed in the room of the seventh.

All these classes of men say, that there is no clear revelation that it is the mind and will of God that the first day of the week should be observed as a day to be set apart for religious exercises, in the room of the ancient sabbath; which there ought to be, in order to the observation of it by the Christian church, as a divine institution. They say, that we ought not to go upon the tradition of past ages, or upon uncertain and far-fetched inferences from some passages of the history of the New Testament, or upon some obscure and uncertain hints in the apostolic writings; but that we ought to expect a plain institution; which, they say, we may conclude God would have given us, if he had designed that the whole Christian church, in all ages, should observe another day of the week for an holy sabbath, than that which was appointed of old by plain and positive institution.

So far, it is undoubtedly true, that if this be the mind and will of God, he hath not left the matter to human tradition; but hath so revealed his mind about it, in his word, that there is to be found good and substantial evidence that it is his mind:

and, doubtless, the revelation is plain enough for them that have ears to hear; that is, for them that will justly exercise their understandings about what God says to them. No Christian, therefore, should rest till he has satisfactorily discovered the mind of God in this matter. If the Christian sabbath be of divine institution, it is doubtless of great importance to religion that it be well kept; and, therefore, that every Christian be well acquainted with the institution.

If men take it only upon trust, and keep the first day of the week because their parents taught them so, or because they see others do it, they will never be likely to keep it so conscientiously and strictly, as if they had been convinced by seeing for themselves, that there are good grounds in the word of God for their practice. Unless they do see thus for themselves, whenever they are negligent in sanctifying the sabbath, or are guilty of profaning it, their consciences will not have that advantage to smite them for it, as otherwise they would. And those who have a sincere desire to obey God in all things, will keep the Sabbath more carefully, and more cheerfully, if they have seen and been convinced, that therein they do what is according to the will and command of God, and what is acceptable to him; and will also have a great deal more comfort in the reflection upon their having carefully and painfully kept the Sabbath.

Therefore, I design now, by the help of God, to show, that it is sufficiently revealed in the scriptures, to be the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be distinguished in the Christian church from other days of the week, as a Sabbath, to be devoted to religious exercises.

In order to this, I shall here premise, that the mind and will of God, concerning any duty to be performed by us, may be sufficiently revealed in his word, without a particular precept in so many express terms, enjoining it. The human understanding is the ear to which the word of God is spoken: and if it be so spoken, that *that* ear may plainly hear it, it is enough. God is sovereign as to the manner of speaking his mind, whether he will speak it in express terms, or whether he will speak it by saying several other things which imply it, and from which we may, by comparing them together, plainly perceive it. If the mind of God be but revealed, if there be but sufficient means for the communication of his mind to our minds, that is sufficient; whether we hear so many express words with our ears, or see them in writing with our eyes; or whether we see the thing that he would signify to us, by the eye of reason and understanding.

Who can positively say, that if it had been the mind of God, that we should keep the first day of the week, he would have commanded it in express terms, as he did the observation

of the seventh day of old? Indeed, if God had so made our faculties, that we were not capable of receiving a revelation of his mind in any other way; then there would have been some reason to say so. But God hath given us such understandings, that we are capable of receiving a revelation, when made in another manner. And if God deals with us agreeably to our natures, and in a way suitable to our capacities, it is enough. If God discovers his mind in any way whatsoever, provided it be according to our faculties, we are obliged to obedience; and God may expect our notice and observance of his revelation, in the same manner as if he had revealed it in express terms.

I shall speak upon this subject under these two general propositions.

1. It is sufficiently clear, that it is the mind of God, that one day of the week should be devoted to rest, and to religious exercises, throughout all ages and nations.

2. It is sufficiently clear, that under the gospel dispensation, this day is the first day of the week.

I. Prop. It is sufficiently clear, that it is the mind of God, that one day of the week should be devoted to rest, and to religious exercises, throughout all ages and nations; and not only among the ancient Israelites, till Christ came, but even in these gospel-times, and among all nations professing Christianity.

1. From the consideration of the nature and state of mankind in this world, it is most consonant to human reason, that certain fixed parts of time should be set apart, to be spent by the church wholly in religious exercises, and in the duties of divine worship. It is a duty incumbent on all mankind, in all ages alike, to worship and serve God. His service should be our great business. It becomes us to worship him with the greatest devotion and engagedness of mind: and therefore to put ourselves, at proper times, in such circumstances, as will most contribute to render our minds entirely devoted to this work, without being diverted or interrupted by other things.

The state of mankind in this world is such, that we are called to concern ourselves in secular business and affairs, which will necessarily in a considerable degree, take up the thoughts and engage the attention of the mind. However some particular persons may be in circumstances more free and disengaged; yet the state of mankind is such, that the bulk of them, in all ages and nations, are called ordinarily to exercise their thoughts about secular affairs, and to follow

worldly business, which, in its own nature, is remote from the solemn duties of religion.

It is therefore most meet and suitable, that certain times should be set apart, upon which men should be required to throw by all other concerns, that their minds may be the more freely and entirely engaged in spiritual exercises, in the duties of religion, and in the immediate worship of God; and that their minds being disengaged from common concerns, their religion may not be mixed with them.

It is also suitable that these times should be fixed and settled, that the church may agree therein, and that they should be the same for all, that men may not interrupt one another; but may rather assist one another by mutual example: for example has a great influence in such cases. If there be a time set apart for public rejoicing, and there be a general manifestation of joy, the general example seems to inspire men with a spirit of joy; one kindles another. So, if it be a time of mourning, and there be general appearances and manifestations of sorrow, it naturally affects the mind, it disposes it to depression, it casts a gloom upon it, and does as it were dull and deaden the spirits.—So if a certain time be set apart as holy time, for general devotion, and solemn religious exercises, a general example tends to render the spirit serious and solemn.

2. Without doubt, one proportion of time is better and fitter than another for this purpose. One proportion is more suitable to the state of mankind, and will have a greater tendency to answer the ends of such times, than another. The times may be too far asunder. I think human reason is sufficient to discover, that it would be too seldom for the purposes of such solemn times, that they should be but once a year. So, I conclude, nobody will deny, but that such times may be too near together to agree with the state and necessary affairs of mankind.

Therefore, there can be no difficulty in allowing, that some certain proportion of time, whether we can exactly discover it or not, is really fittest and best—considering the end for which such times are kept, and the condition, circumstances, and necessary affairs of men; and considering what the state of man is, taking one age and nation with another—more convenient and suitable than any other; which God may know and exactly determine, though we, by reason of the scantiness of our understandings, cannot.

As a certain frequency of the returns of these times may be more suitable than any other, so one length or continuance of the times themselves may be fitter than another, to answer the purposes of such times. If such times, when they come, were to last but an hour, it would not well answer the end; for then worldly things would crowd too nearly upon sacred exer-

cises, and there would not be that opportunity to get the mind so thoroughly free and disengaged from other things, as there would be, if the times were longer. Being so short, sacred and profane things would be, as it were, mixed together. Therefore, a certain distance between these times, and a certain continuance of them when they come, is more proper than others; which God knows and is able to determine, though perhaps we cannot.

3. It is unreasonable to suppose any other, than that God's working six days, and resting the seventh, and blessing and hallowing it, was to be of general use in determining this matter, and that it was written, that the practice of mankind in general might some way or other be regulated by it. What could be the meaning of God's resting the seventh day, and hallowing and blessing it, which he did, before the giving of the fourth commandment, unless he hallowed and blessed it with respect to mankind? For he did not bless and sanctify it with respect to himself, or that he, within himself, might observe it: as that is most absurd. And it is unreasonable to suppose, that he hallowed it only with respect to the Jews, a particular nation, which rose up about two thousand years after.

So much, therefore, must be intended by it, that it was his mind, that mankind should, after his example, work six days, and then rest, and hallow, or sanctify the next following; and that they should sanctify every seventh day, or that the space between rest and rest, one hallowed time and another, among his creatures here upon earth, should be six days. So that it hence appears to be the mind and will of God, that not only the Jews, but men in all nations and ages, should sanctify one day in seven: which is the thing we are endeavouring to prove.

4. The mind of God in this matter, is clearly revealed in the fourth commandment. The will of God is there revealed, not only that the Israelitish nation, but that all nations, should keep every seventh day holy; or, which is the same thing, one day after every six. This command, as well as the rest, is, doubtless, everlasting, and of perpetual obligation, at least, as to the substance of it, as is intimated by its being engraven on the tables of stone. Nor is it to be thought, that Christ ever abolished any command of the ten; but that there is the complete number ten yet, and will be to the end of the world.

Some say, that the fourth command is perpetual, but not in its literal sense; not as designing any particular proportion of time to be set apart and devoted to literal rest and religious exercises. They say, that it stands in force only in a mystical sense, *viz.* as that weekly rest of the Jews typified spiritual rest in the Christian church; and that we, under the gospel,

are not to make any distinction of one day from another, but are to keep all time holy, doing every thing in a spiritual manner.

But this is an absurd way of interpreting the command, as it refers to Christians. For, if the command be so far abolished, it is entirely abolished. For it is the very design of the command, to fix the time of worship. The first command fixes the object, the second the means, the third the manner, the fourth the time. And, if it stands in force now only as signifying a spiritual, Christian rest, and holy behaviour at all times, it doth not remain as one of the ten commands, but as a summary of all the commands.

The main objection against the perpetuity of this command, is, that the duty required is not moral. Those laws whose obligation arises from the nature of things, and from the general state and nature of mankind, as well as from God's positive revealed will, are called moral laws. Others, whose obligation depends merely upon God's positive and arbitrary institution, are not moral; such as the ceremonial laws, and the precepts of the gospel, about the two sacraments. Now the objectors say, they will allow all that is moral in the decalogue to be of perpetual obligation; but this command, they say, is not moral.

But this objection is weak and insufficient for the purpose for which it is brought, or to prove that the fourth command, as to the substance of it, is not of perpetual obligation. For,

(1.) If it should be allowed that there is no morality belonging to the command, and that the duty required is founded merely on arbitrary institution; it cannot, therefore, be certainly concluded, that the command is not perpetual. We know that there may be commands in force under the gospel, and to the end of the world, which are not moral: such are the institutions of the two sacraments. And why may there not be positive commands in force in all ages of the church? If positive arbitrary institutions are in force in gospel-times, what is there which concludes that no positive precept given before the times of the gospel can yet continue in force? But,

(2.) As we have observed already, the thing in general, that there should be certain fixed parts of time set apart to be devoted to religious exercises, is founded in the fitness of the thing, arising from the nature of things, and the nature and universal state of mankind. Therefore, there is as much reason that there should be a command of perpetual and universal obligation about this, as about any other duty whatsoever. For if the thing in general, that there be a time fixed, be founded in the nature of things, there is consequent upon it a necessity, that the time be limited by a command; for there

must be a proportion of time fixed, or else the general moral duty cannot be observed.

(3.) The particular determination of the proportion of time in the fourth commandment, is also founded in the nature of things; only our understandings are not sufficient absolutely to determine it of themselves. We have observed already, that without doubt one proportion of time is in itself fitter than another, and a certain continuance of time fitter than any other, considering the universal state and nature of mankind, which God may see, though our understandings are not perfect enough absolutely to determine it. So that the difference between this command and others, doth not lie in this, that other commands are founded in the fitness of the things themselves, arising from the universal state and nature of mankind, and this not: but only, that the fitness of other commands is more obvious to the understandings of men, and they might have seen it of themselves; but this could not be precisely discovered and positively determined without the assistance of revelation.

So that the command of God, that every seventh day should be devoted to religious exercises, is founded in the universal state and nature of mankind, as well as other commands; only man's reason is not sufficient, without divine direction, so exactly to determine it: Though perhaps man's reason is sufficient to determine, that it ought not to be much seldomer, nor much oftener than once in seven days.

5. God appears in his word laying abundantly more weight on this precept concerning the sabbath, than on any precept of the ceremonial law. It is in the decalogue, one of the ten commands, which were delivered by God with an audible voice. It was written with his own finger on the tables of stone in the mount, and was appointed afterwards to be written on the tables which Moses made. The keeping of the weekly sabbath is spoken of by the prophets, as that wherein consists a great part of holiness of life; and is inserted among moral duties, Isaiah lviii. 13, 14. "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

6. It is foretold that this command should be observed in gospel-times; as Isaiah lvi. at the beginning, where the due observance of the sabbath is spoken of as a great part of holiness of life, and is placed among moral duties. It is also mentioned as a duty that should be most acceptable to God from

his people, even where the prophet is speaking of gospel-times; as in the foregoing chapter, and in the first verse of this chapter. And, in the third and fourth verses, the prophet is speaking of the abolition of the ceremonial law in gospel-times, and particularly of that law, which forbids eunuchs to come into the congregation of the Lord. Yet, here the man is pronounced blessed, who keeps the sabbath from polluting it, ver. 2. And even in the very sentence where the eunuchs are spoken of as being free from the ceremonial law, they are spoken of as being yet under obligation to keep the sabbath, and actually keeping it, as that which God lays great weight upon: "For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant: Even unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off."

Besides, the strangers spoken of in the sixth and seventh verses, are the Gentiles, that should be called in the times of the gospel, as is evident by the last clause in the seventh, and by the eighth verse: "For mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord God, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered unto him." Yet it is represented here as their duty to keep the sabbath: "Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant: even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer."

7. A further argument for the perpetuity of the sabbath, we have in Matt. xxiv. 20. "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day." Christ is here speaking of the flight of the apostles and other Christians out of Jerusalem and Judea, just before their final destruction, as is manifest by the whole context, and especially by the 16th verse: "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." But this final destruction of Jerusalem was after the dissolution of the Jewish constitution, and after the Christian dispensation was fully set up. Yet, it is plainly implied in these words of our Lord, that even then Christians were bound to a strict observation of the sabbath.

Thus I have shown, that it is the will of God, that every seventh day be devoted to rest and to religious exercises.

SERMON XIV.*

THE PERPETUITY AND CHANGE OF THE SABBATH.

1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

The *doctrine* founded on these words was this, that it is the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be especially set apart among Christians, for religious exercises and duties.

I proposed to discourse upon this doctrine under two propositions; and having already, under the first, endeavoured to prove, That one day of the week is, throughout all ages, to be devoted to religious exercises; I proceed now to the

II. Prop. That it is the will of God, that under the gospel dispensation, or in the Christian church, this day should be the first day of the week.

In order to the confirmation of this, let the following things be considered.

1. The words of the fourth commandment afford no objection against this being the day that should be the sabbath, any more than against any other day. That this day, which according to the Jewish reckoning, is the first of the week, should be kept as a sabbath, is no more opposite to any sentence or word of the fourth command, than that the seventh of the week should be the day. The words of the fourth command do not determine which day of the week we should keep as a sabbath; they merely determine, that we should rest and keep as a sabbath every seventh day, or one day after every six. It says, "Six days thou shalt labour, and the

seventh thou shalt rest;" which implies no more, than that after six days of labour, we shall, upon the next to the sixth, rest and keep it holy. And this we are obliged to do for ever. But the words no way determine where those six days shall begin, and so where the rest or sabbath shall fall. There is no direction in the fourth command how to reckon the time, *i. e.* where to begin and end it; but that is supposed to be determined otherwise.

The Jews did not know, by the fourth command, where to begin their six days, and on which particular day to rest; this was determined by another precept. The fourth command does indeed suppose a particular day appointed; but it does not appoint any. It requires us to rest and keep holy a seventh day, one after every six of labour, which particular day God either had or should appoint. The particular day was determined for that nation in another place, *viz.* in Exod. xvi. 23, 25, 26. "And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake, to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And Moses said, Eat that to-day; for to-day is a sabbath unto the Lord: to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none." This is the first place where we have any mention made of this sabbath, from the first sabbath on which God rested.

It seems that the Israelites, in the time of their bondage in Egypt, had lost the true reckoning of time by the days of the week, reckoning from the first day of the creation. They were slaves, and in cruel bondage, and had in a great measure forgotten the true religion: for we are told, that they served the gods of Egypt. And it is not to be supposed, that the Egyptians would suffer their slaves to rest from their work every seventh day. Now, they having remained in bondage for so long a time, had probably lost the weekly reckoning; therefore, when God had brought them out of Egypt into the wilderness, he made known to them the sabbath, on the occasion and in the manner recorded in the text just now quoted. Hence, we read in Nehemiah, that when God had led the children of Israel out of Egypt, &c. he made known unto them his holy sabbath; Neh. ix. 14. "And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath." To the same effect, we read in Ezek. xx. 10, 12. "Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. Moreover also, I gave them my sabbaths."

But they never would have known where the particular day would have fallen by the fourth command. Indeed, the fourth

command, as it was spoken to the Jews, did refer to their Jewish sabbath. But that doth not prove, that the day was determined and appointed by it. The precept in the fourth command is to be taken generally of such a seventh day as God should appoint, or had appointed. And because such a particular day had been already appointed for the Jewish church; therefore, as it was spoken to them, it did refer to that particular day. But this doth not prove, but that the same words refer to another appointed seventh day, now in the Christian church. The words of the fourth command may oblige the church, under different dispensations, to observe different appointed seventh days, as well as the fifth command may oblige different persons to honour different fathers and mothers.

The Christian sabbath, in the sense of the fourth command, is as much the seventh day, as the Jewish sabbath; because it is kept after six days of labour, as well as that; it is the seventh, reckoning from the beginning of our first working-day, as well as that was the seventh from the beginning of their first working-day. All the difference is, that the seven days formerly began from the day after God's rest from the creation, and now they begin the day after that. It is no matter by what names the days are called: if our nation had, for instance, called Wednesday the first of the week, it would have been all one as to this argument.

Therefore, by the institution of the Christian sabbath, there is no change from the fourth command; but the change is from another law, which determined the beginning and ending of their working-days. So that those words of the fourth command, *viz.* "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work; but the seventh is the sabbath of the Lord thy God;" afford no objection against that which is called the Christian sabbath; for these words remain in full force. Neither does any just objection arise from the words following, *viz.* "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it." These words are not made insignificant to Christians, by the institution of the Christian sabbath: they still remain in their full force as to that which is principally intended by them. They were designed to give us a reason why we are to work but six days at a time, and then rest on the seventh, because God hath set us the example. And taken so, they remain still in as much force as ever they were. This is the reason still, as much as ever it was, why we may work but six days at a time. What is the reason that Christians rest every seventh, and not every eighth, or every ninth, or tenth day? It is because God worked six days and rested the seventh.

It is true, these words did carry something further in their meaning, as they were spoken to the Jews, and to the church

before the coming of Christ: it was then also intended by them, that the seventh day was to be kept in commemoration of the work of creation. But this is no objection to the supposition, that the words, as they relate to us, do not import all that they did, as they related to the Jews. For there are other words which were written upon those tables of stone with the ten commandments, which are known and allowed not to be of the same import, as they relate to us, and as they related to the Jews, *viz.* these words in the preface to the ten commands, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." These words were written on the tables of stone with the rest, and are spoken to us, as well as to the Jews: they are spoken to all to whom the commandments themselves are spoken; for they are spoken as an enforcement of the commandments. But they do not now remain in all the signification which they had, as they respected the Jews. For we never were brought out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, except in a mystical sense. The same may be said of those words which are inserted in the commandments themselves, Deut. v. 15. "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day."

So that all the arguments of those who are against the Christian sabbath, drawn from the fourth command, which are all their strength, come to nothing.

2. That the ancient church was commanded to keep a seventh day in commemoration of the work of creation, is an argument for the keeping of a weekly sabbath in commemoration of the work of redemption, and not any reason against it.

We read in scripture of two creations, the old and the new: and these words of the fourth command are to be taken as of the same force to those who belong to the new creation, with respect to that new creation, as they were to those who belonged to the old creation, with respect to that. We read, that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and the church of old were to commemorate that work. But when God creates a new heaven and a new earth, those that belong to this new heaven and new earth, by a like reason, are to commemorate the creation of their heaven and earth.

The scriptures teach us to look upon the old creation as destroyed, and as it were annihilated by sin; or, as being reduced to a chaos again, without form and void, as it was at first. Jer. iv. 22, 23. "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light:" *i. e.* they were reduced to the same state in which they were at first;

the earth was without form and void, and there was no light, but darkness was upon the face of the deep.

The scripture further teaches us to call the gospel-restoration and redemption, a creation of a new heaven and a new earth; Isa. lxv. 17, 18. "For behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be you glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." And Isa. li. 16. "And I have put my words into thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people."—And chap. lxvi. 22. "For as the new heavens, and the new earth which I will make," &c. In these places we are not only told of a new creation, or new heavens and a new earth, but we are told what is meant by it, *viz.* The gospel renovation, the making of Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy; saying unto Zion, "Thou art my people," &c. The prophet, in all these places is prophesying of the gospel redemption.

The gospel-state is every where spoken of as a renewed state of things, wherein old things are passed away, and all things become new: We are said to be created unto Christ Jesus, unto good works: all things are restored and reconciled, whether in heaven or in earth, and God hath caused light to shine out of darkness, as he did at the beginning; and the dissolution of the Jewish state was often spoken of in the Old Testament as the end of the world. But we who belong to the gospel-church, belong to the new creation; and therefore there seems to be at least as much reason, that we should commemorate the work of this creation, as that the members of the ancient Jewish church should commemorate the work of the old creation.

3. There is another thing which confirms it, that the fourth command teaches God's resting from the new creation, as well as from the old: which is, that the scriptures expressly speak of the one, as parallel with the other, *i. e.* Christ's resting from the work of redemption, is expressly spoken of as being parallel with God's resting from the work of creation. Heb. iv. 10. "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

Now, Christ rested from his works when he rose from the dead, on the first day of the week. When he rose from the dead, then he finished his work of redemption: his humiliation was then at an end; he then rested, and was refreshed.—When it is said, "There remaineth a rest to the people of God;" in the original, it is, a *sabbatism*, or *the keeping of a sabbath:* And this reason is given for it, "For he that entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God

did from his." These three things at least we are taught by these words:

(1.) To look upon Christ's rest from his work of redemption, as parallel with God's rest from the work of creation; for they are expressly compared together, as parallel one with the other.

(2.) They are spoken of as parallel, particularly in this respect, *viz.* The relation which they both have to the keeping of a Sabbath, among God's people, or with respect to the influence which these two rests have, as to sabbatizing in the church of God: for it is expressly with respect to this that they are compared together. Here is an evident reference to God's blessing and hallowing the day of his rest from the creation to be a Sabbath, and appointing a Sabbath of rest in imitation of him. For the apostle is speaking of this, verse 4. "For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise: And God did rest the seventh day from all his works." Thus far is evident; whatever the apostle has respect to by this keeping of a Sabbath by the people of God, whether it be a weekly sabbatizing on earth, or a sabbatizing in heaven.

(3.) It is evident in these words, that the preference is given to the latter rest, *viz.* The rest of our Saviour from his works, with respect to the influence it should have, or relation it bears to the sabbatizing of the people of God, now under the gospel, evidently implied in the expression, "There remaineth, therefore, a sabbatism to the people of God. For he that entered into his rest," &c. For, in this expression, *There remaineth*, it is intimated, that the old sabbatism appointed in remembrance of God's rest, from the work of creation, doth not remain, but ceases; and that this new rest, in commemoration of Christ's resting from his works, remains in the room of it.

4. The Holy Ghost hath implicitly told us, that the sabbath which was instituted in commemoration of the old creation, should not be kept in gospel-times. Isaiah lxv. 17, 18. There we are told, that when God should create new heavens and a new earth, the former should not be remembered, nor come into mind. If this be so, it is not to be supposed, that we are to keep a seventh part of time, on purpose to remember it, and call it to mind.

Let us understand this which way we will, it will not be well consistent with the keeping of one day in seven, in the gospel-church, principally for the remembrance and calling to mind of the old creation. If the meaning of the place be only this, that the old creation shall not be remembered nor come into mind in comparison with the *new*—that the *new* will be so much more remarkable and glorious, will so much more nearly concern us, so much more notice will be taken of it, and it will

be thought so much more worthy to be remembered and commemorated, that the other will not be remembered, nor come into mind—it is impossible that it should be more to our purpose. For then hereby the Holy Ghost teaches us, that the Christian church has much more reason to commemorate the new creation than the old: insomuch, that the old is worthy to be forgotten in comparison with it.

And as the old creation was no more to be remembered, nor come into mind, so, in the following verse, the church is directed for ever to commemorate the new creation: "But be you glad, and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy;" *i. e.* Though you forget the old, yet for ever to the end of the world, keep a remembrance of the new creation.

5. It is an argument that the Jewish sabbath was not to be perpetual, that the Jews were commanded to keep it in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt. One reason why it was instituted, was, because God thus delivered them, as we are expressly told, Deut. v. 15. "And remember, that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm: therefore, the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day." Now, can any person think, that God would have all nations under the gospel, and to the end of the world, keep a day every week, which was instituted in remembrance of the deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt.

6. The Holy Ghost hath implicitly told us, that instituted memorials of the Jews' deliverance from Egypt, should be no longer upheld in gospel-times, Jer. xvi. 14, 15. The Holy Ghost, speaking of gospel-times, says, "Therefore, behold the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt; but, the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their own land." *They shall no more say, The Lord liveth, that brought*, &c. *i. e.* at least they shall keep up no more any public memorials of it.

If there be a sabbath kept in gospel-times, as we have shown there must be, it is more just from these words to suppose, that it should be as a memorial of that which is spoken of in the latter verse, *the bringing up of the children of Israel from the land of the north:* that is, the redemption of Christ, and his bringing home the elect, not only from Judea, but from the north, and from all quarters of the world.—See Isa. xliii. 16—20.

7. It is no more than just to suppose, that God intended to intimate to us, that the sabbath ought by Christians to be kept in commemoration of Christ's redemption, in that the

Israelites were commanded to keep it in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt; because that deliverance out of Egypt is an evident, known, and allowed type of it. It was ordered of God, on purpose to represent it; every thing about that deliverance was typical of this redemption, and much is made of it, principally for this reason, because it is so remarkable a type of Christ's redemption. And it was but a shadow, the work in itself was nothing in comparison with the work of redemption. What is a petty redemption of one nation from a temporal bondage, to the eternal salvation of the whole church of the elect, in all ages and nations, from eternal damnation, and the introduction of them, not into a temporal Canaan, but into heaven, into eternal glory and blessedness? Was that shadow so much to be commemorated, as that a day once a week was to be kept on the account of it; and shall not we much more commemorate that great and glorious work of which it was designed on purpose to be a shadow?

Besides, the words in the fourth commandment, which speak of the deliverance out of Egypt, can be of no significancy unto us, unless they are to be interpreted of the gospel-redemption: but the words of the decalogue are spoken to all nations and ages. Therefore, as the words were spoken to the Jews, they referred to the type or shadow; as they are spoken to us, they are to be interpreted of the antitype and substance. For the Egypt from which we under the gospel are redeemed, is the spiritual Egypt; the house of bondage from which we are redeemed, is a state of spiritual bondage.—Therefore the words, as spoken to us, are to be thus interpreted, Remember thou wast a servant to sin and Satan, and the Lord thy God delivered thee from this bondage, with a mighty hand and outstretched arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day.

As the words in the preface to the ten commandments, about the bringing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, are interpreted in our catechism, and as they have respect to us, must be interpreted of our spiritual redemption, so, by an exact identity of reason, must these words in Deuteronomy, annexed to the fourth command, be interpreted of the same gospel-redemption.

The Jewish sabbath was kept on the day that the children of Israel came up out of the Red Sea. For we are told in Deut. v. 15. that this holy rest of the sabbath was appointed in commemoration of their coming up out of Egypt. But the day of their going through the Red Sea was the day of their coming up out of Egypt; for till then they were in the land of Egypt. The Red Sea was the boundary of the land of Egypt—The scripture itself tells us, that the day on which they sung the song of Moses, was the day of their coming up out of

the land of Egypt; Hosea ii. 15. "And she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt; referring plainly to that triumphant song which Moses and the children of Israel sang when they came up out of the Red Sea.

The scripture tells us that God appointed the Jewish sabbath in commemoration of the deliverance of the children of Israel from their task-masters, the Egyptians, and of their rest from their hard bondage and slavery under them; Deut. v. 14, 15. "That thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day." But the day that the children of Israel were delivered from their task-masters and had rest from them, was the day when the children of Israel came up out of the Red Sea. They had no rest from them till then. For though they were before come forth on their journey to go out of the land of Egypt; yet they were pursued by the Egyptians, and were exceedingly perplexed and distressed. But on the morning that they came up out of the Red Sea, they had complete and final deliverance; then they had full rest from their task-masters. Then God said to them, "The Egyptians which ye have seen this day, ye shall see no more for ever;" Exod. xiv. 13. Then they enjoyed a joyful day of rest, a day of refreshment. Then they sang the song of Moses; and on that day was their sabbath of rest.

But this coming up of the children of Israel out of the Red Sea, was only a *type* of the resurrection of Christ. That people was the mystical body of Christ, and Moses was a great type of Christ himself; and besides, on that day Christ went before the children of Israel in the pillar of cloud and of fire, as their Saviour and Redeemer. On that morning Christ, in this pillar of cloud and fire, rose out of the Red Sea, as out of great waters; which was a type of Christ's rising from a state of death, and from that great humiliation which he suffered in death.

The resurrection of Christ from the dead, is in scripture represented by his coming up out of deep waters. So it is in Christ's resurrection, as represented by Jonah's coming out of the sea; Matt. xii. 40. It is also compared to a deliverance out of deep waters, Psalm lxix. 1, 2, 3. and verse 14, 15. These things are spoken of Christ, as is evident from this, that many things in this Psalm are in the New Testament expressly applied to Christ.*—Therefore, as the Jewish sabbath was

* Compare verse 4. with John xv. 25. and verse 9. with John ii. 17. and verse 2. with Matt. xxvii. 34. 48. and Mark xv. 23. and John xix. 29. and verse 22. with Rom. xi. 9, 10. and verse 25. with Acts i. 20.

appointed on the day on which the pillar of cloud and fire rose out of the Red Sea, and on which Moses and the church, the mystical body of Christ, came up out of the same sea, which is a type of the resurrection of Christ: it is a great confirmation that the Christian sabbath should be kept on the day of the rising of the real body of Christ from the grave, which is the antitype. For surely the scriptures have taught us, that the type should give way to the antitype, and that the shadow should give way to the substance.

8. I argue the same thing from Psalm cxviii. 22, 23, 24. There we are taught, that the day of Christ's resurrection is to be celebrated with holy joy by the church. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." The stone spoken of is Christ; he was refused and rejected by the builders, especially when he was put to death. That making him the head of the corner, which is the Lord's doing, and so marvellous in our eyes, is Christ's exaltation, which began with his resurrection. While Christ lay in the grave, he lay as a stone cast away by the builders. But when God raised him from the dead, then he became the head of the corner. Thus it is evident the apostle interprets it, Acts iv. 10, 11. "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead," &c.—"This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner."—And the day on which this was done, we are here taught, God hath made to be the day of the rejoicing of the church.

9. The abolition of the Jewish sabbath seems to be intimated by this, that Christ, the Lord of the sabbath, lay buried on that day. Christ, the author of the world, was the author of that work of creation of which the Jewish sabbath was the memorial. It was he that worked six days and rested the seventh day from all his works, and was refreshed. Yet he was holden in the chains of death on that day.—God, who created the world, now in his second work of creation, did not follow his own example, if I may so speak; he remained imprisoned in the grave on that day, and took another day to rest in.

The sabbath was a day of rejoicing; for it was kept in commemoration of God's glorious and gracious works of creation, and the redemption out of Egypt. Therefore we are directed to call the sabbath a delight. But it is not a proper day for the church, Christ's spouse, to rejoice, when Christ the bridegroom lies buried in the grave, as Christ says, Matt. ix. 15. "That the children of the bride-chamber cannot mourn,

while the bridegroom is with them. But the time will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them; then shall they mourn."—While Christ was holden under the chains of death; then the bridegroom was taken from them; then it was a proper time for the spouse to mourn and not rejoice. But when Christ rose again, then it was a day of joy, because we are begotten again to a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

10. Christ hath evidently, on purpose and design, peculiarly honoured the first day of the week, the day on which he rose from the dead, by taking it from time to time to appear to the apostles; and he chose this day to pour out the Holy Ghost on the apostles, which we read of in the second chapter of Acts. For this was on Pentecost, which was on the first day of the week, as you may see by Levit. xxiii. 15, 16. and he honoured this day by pouring out his Spirit on the apostle John, and giving him his visions, Rev. i. 10. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," &c.—Now doubtless Christ had his meaning in thus distinguishingly honouring this day.

11. It is evident by the New Testament, that this was especially the day of the public worship of the primitive church, by the direction of the apostles. We are told that this was the day that they were wont to come together to break bread; and this they evidently did with the approbation of the apostles, inasmuch as they preached to them on that day; and therefore doubtless they assembled together by the direction of the apostles. Acts xx. 7. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." So the Holy Ghost was careful that the public contributions should be on this day, in all the churches, rather than on any other day, as it appears by our text.

12. This first day of the week is in the New Testament called *the Lord's day;* see Rev. i. 10.—Some say, how do we know that this was the first day of the week? Every day is the Lord's day. But it is the design of John to tell us *when* he had those visions. And if by the Lord's day is meant any day, how doth that inform us *when* that event took place?

But what is meant by this expression, we know, just in the same way as we know what is the meaning of any word in the original of the New Testament, or the meaning of any expression in an ancient language, *viz.* by what we find to be the universal signification of the expression in ancient times. This expression, *the Lord's day*, is found by the ancient use of the whole Christian church, by what appears in all the writings of ancient times, even from the apostles' days, to signify the first day of the week.

And the expression implies in it the holiness of the day. For, doubtless, the day is called *the Lord's day,* as the sacred

supper is called *the Lord's supper*, which is so called, because it is an *holy* supper, to be celebrated in remembrance of the Lord Christ, and of his redemption. So this is an holy day, to be kept in remembrance of the Lord Christ, and his redemption.

The first day of the week being in scripture called the Lord's day, sufficiently makes it out to be the day of the week that is to be kept holy unto God; for God hath been pleased to call it by his own name. When any thing is called by the name of God in scripture, this denotes the appropriation of it to God. Thus God put his name upon his people Israel of old; Numb. vi. 27. "And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel." They were called by the name of God, as it is said, 2 Chron. vii. 14. "If my people, which are called by my name, &c.; *i. e.* They were called God's people, or the Lord's people. This denoted that they were an holy, peculiar people, above all others. Deut. vii. 6. "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord; and so in verse 14, and many other places.

So the city Jerusalem was called by God's name; Jer. xxv. 29.—"Upon the city which is called by my name." Dan. ix. 18, 19. "And the city which is called by thy name," &c. This denoted, that it was an holy city, a city chosen of God above all other cities for holy uses, as it is often called *the holy city*, as in Neh. xi. 1. "To dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city;" and in many other places.

So the temple is said to be, an house called by God's name; 1 Kings, viii. 43. "This house that is called by my name." And often elsewhere. That is, it was called God's house, or the Lord's house. This denoted that it was called an holy place, an house devoted to holy uses, above all others.

So, also, we find, that the first day of the week is called by God's name, being called in scripture God's day, or *the Lord's day*, which denotes that it is an holy day, a day appropriated to holy uses, above all others in the week.

13. The tradition of the church from age to age, though it be no rule, yet may be a great confirmation of the truth in such a case as this is. We find, by all accounts, that it hath been the universal custom of the Christian church, in all ages, even from the age of the apostles, to keep the first day of the week. We read in the writings which remain of the first, second, and third centuries, of the Christians' keeping the Lord's day; and so in all succeeding ages: and there are no accounts that contradict them. This day hath all along been kept by Christians, in all countries throughout the world, and by almost all that have borne the name of Christians, of all denominations, however different in their opinions as to other things.

Now, although this be not sufficient of itself, without a foundation in scripture, yet it may be a confirmation of it, because here is really matter of conviction in it to our reason. Reason may greatly confirm truths revealed in the scriptures. The universality of the custom throughout all Christian countries, in all ages, by what account we have of them, is a good argument, that the church had it from the apostles: and it is difficult to conceive how all should come to agree to set up such a custom through the world, of different sects and opinions, and we have no account of any such thing.

14. It is no way weakening to these arguments, that there is nothing more plainly said about it in the New Testament, till John wrote his *Revelation*, because there is a sufficient reason to be given for it. In all probability, it was purposely avoided by the Holy Spirit, in the first settling of Christian churches in the world, both among the Heathen and among the Jews, but especially for the sake of the Jews, and out of tenderness to the Jewish Christians. For it is evident, that Christ, and the apostles, declared one thing after another to them gradually as they could bear it.

The Jews had a regard for their sabbath above almost any thing in the laws of Moses; and there was that in the Old Testament which tended to uphold them in the observance of this, much more strongly than any thing else that was Jewish. God had made so much of it, had so solemnly, frequently, and carefully commanded it, and had often so dreadfully punished the breach of it, that there was more colour for their retaining this custom, than almost any other.

Therefore, Christ dealt very tenderly with them in this point. Other things of this nature, we find very gradually revealed. Christ had many things to say, as we are informed, which yet he said not, because they could not as yet bear them, and gave this reason for it, that it was like putting new wine into old bottles. They were so contrary to their old customs, that Christ was gradual in revealing them. He gave here a little, and there a little, as they could bear; and it was a long time before he told them plainly the principal doctrines of the kingdom of heaven. He took the most favourable opportunities to tell them of his sufferings and death, especially when they were full of admiration at some signal miracle, and were confirmed in it, that he was the Messiah.

He told them many things much more plainly after his resurrection than before. But even then, he did not tell them all, but left more to be revealed by the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. They therefore were much more enlightened after that than before. However, as yet he did not reveal all. The abolition of the ceremonial law about meats and drinks was not fully known till after this.

The apostles were in the same manner careful and tender of those to whom they preached and wrote. It was very gradually that they ventured to teach them the cessation of the ceremonial laws of circumcision, and abstinence from unclean meats. How tender is the apostle Paul with such as scrupled, in the fourteenth chapter of Romans? He directs those who had knowledge to keep it to themselves, for the sake of their weak brethren. Rom. xiv. 22.—But I need say no more to evince this.

However, I will say this, that it is very possible that the apostles themselves at first might not have this change of the day of the sabbath fully revealed to them. The Holy Ghost, at his descent, revealed much to them, yet after that, they were ignorant of much of gospel-doctrine; yea, they were so a great while after they acted the part of apostles, in preaching, baptizing, and governing the church. Peter was surprised when he was commanded to eat meats legally unclean; and so were the apostles in general, when Peter was commanded to go to the Gentiles, to preach to them.

Thus tender was Christ of the church while an infant. He did not feed them with strong meat, but was careful to bring in the observance of the Lord's day by degrees, and therefore took all occasions to honour it, by appearing from time to time of choice on that day; by sending down his Spirit on that day in that remarkable manner at Pentecost; by ordering Christians to meet in order to break bread on that day, and by ordering their contributions and other duties of worship to be holden on it; thus introducing the observance of it by degrees. And though as yet the Holy Ghost did not speak very plainly about it, yet God took special care that there should be sufficient evidences of his will, to be found out by the Christian church, when it should be more established and settled, and should have come to the strength of a man.

Thus I leave it with every one to judge, whether there be not sufficient evidence, that it is the mind and will of God that the first day of the week should be kept by the Christian church as a sabbath.

SERMON XV.

THE PERPETUITY AND CHANGE OF THE SABBATH.

1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

It is the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be especially set apart among Christians for religious exercises and duties.

On this *doctrine* I have already discoursed, under two propositions, showing, *first*, That it is the will of God, that one day of the week be, in all ages, set apart for religious duties; and *secondly*, That under the gospel, this day ought to be the *first* day of the week. I now proceed to the

APPLICATION.

This shall be in an use of *exhortation*.

1. Let us be *thankful* for the institution of the Christian sabbath. It is a thing wherein God hath shown his mercy to us, and his care for our souls. He shows, that he, by his infinite wisdom, is contriving for our good, as Christ teaches us that the sabbath was made for man; Mark ii. 27. "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." It was made for the profit and for the comfort of our souls.

The sabbath is a day of *rest:* God hath appointed that we should, every seventh day, rest from all our worldly labours. Instead of that, he might have appointed the hardest labours for us to go through, some severe hardships for us to endure. It is a day of outward, but especially of *spiritual* rest. It is a

day appointed of God, that his people thereon may find rest unto their souls; that the souls of believers may rest and be refreshed in their Saviour. It is a day of *rejoicing:* God made it to be a joyful day to the church; Psal. cxviii. 24.—"This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." They that aright receive and improve the sabbath, call it a *delight* and *honourable:* it is a pleasant and a joyful day to them; it is an image of the future heavenly rest of the church. Heb. iv. 9, 10, 11. "There remaineth therefore a rest (or sabbatism, as it is in the original) to the people of God. For he that hath entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest."

The Christian sabbath is one of the most precious enjoyments of the visible church. Christ showed his love to his church in instituting it; and it becomes the Christian church to be thankful to her Lord for it. The very name of this day, *the Lord's day, or Jesus's day*, should endear it to Christians, as it intimates the special relation it has to Christ, and also the design of it, which is the commemoration of our dear Saviour, and his love to his church in redeeming it.

2. Be exhorted to *keep* this day holy.—God hath given such evidences that this is his mind, that he will surely require it of you, if you do not strictly and conscientiously observe it. And if you do thus observe it, you may have this comfort in the reflection upon your conduct, that you have not been superstitious in it, but have done as God hath revealed it to be his mind and will in his word, that you should do; and that in so doing you are in the way of God's acceptance and reward.

Here let me lay before you the following *motives* to excite you to this duty.

(1.) By a strict observation of the sabbath, the name of God is honoured, and that in such a way as is very acceptable to him. Isa. lviii. 13. "If thou call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and *shalt honour him.*" God is honoured by it, as it is a visible manifestation of respect to God's holy law, and a reverencing of that which has a peculiar relation to God himself, and that more in some respects than the observance of many other commands. And man may be just, and generous, and yet not so plainly show respect to the revealed mind and will of God, for many of the Heathen have been so. But if a person with evident strictness and care, observe the sabbath, it is a visible manifestation of a conscientious regard to God's declaration of his mind, and so is a visible honour done to his authority.

By a strict observance of the sabbath, the face of religion is kept up in the world. If it were not for the sabbath, there would be but little public and visible appearance of serving

worshipping, and reverencing the supreme and invisible Being. The sabbath seems to have been appointed very much for this end, *viz.* to uphold the visibility of religion in public, or among professing societies of men; and by how much greater the strictness is with which the sabbath is observed, and with how much more solemnity the duties of it are observed, among a people; by so much the greater is the manifestation among them of respect to the divine Being.

This should be a powerful motive with us to the observation of the Sabbath. It should be our study above all things to honour and glorify God. It should be the great thing with all that bear the name of Christians, to honour their great God and King, and I hope is a great thing with many that hear me at this time. If it be your inquiry, if it be your desire, to honour God; by this subject you are directed to one way whereby you may do much in that way, *viz.* by honouring the Sabbath and by showing a careful and strict observance of it.

(2.) That which is the business of the Sabbath, is the greatest business of our lives, *viz.* that of religion. To serve and worship God, is that for which we were made, and for which we had our being given us. Other business, which is of a secular nature, and on which we are wont to attend on week days, is but subordinate, and ought to be subservient to the higher purposes and ends of religion. Therefore, surely we should not think much of devoting one seventh part of our time, to be *wholly* spent in this business, and to be set apart to exercise ourselves in the immediate duties of religion.

(3.) Let it be considered, that all our time is God's, and therefore, when he challenges of us one day in seven, he challenges his *own*. He doth not exceed his right; he would not have exceeded it, if he had challenged a far greater proportion of our time to be spent in his immediate service. But he hath mercifully considered our state, and our necessities here; and, as he hath consulted the good of our souls in appointing a seventh day, for the immediate duties of religion, so he hath considered our outward necessities, and hath allowed us six days for attendance on our outward affairs. What unworthy treatment, therefore, will it be of God, if we refuse to allow him even the seventh day!

(4.) As the Sabbath is a day which is especially set apart for religious exercises, so it is a day wherein God especially confers his grace and blessing. As God hath commanded us to set it apart to have converse with him, so hath he set it apart for himself to have converse with us. As God hath commanded us to observe the Sabbath, so God observes the Sabbath too. It is with respect to the Sabbath, as Solomon prayed that it might be with respect to the temple, 2 Chron. vi. 20. His eyes are open upon it: He stands ready then especially

to hear prayers, to accept of religious services, to meet his people, to manifest himself to them, to give his Holy Spirit and blessing to those who diligently and conscientiously sanctify it.

That we should sanctify the Sabbath, as we have observed, is according to God's institution. God, in a sense, observes his own institutions; *i. e.* is wont to cause them to be attended with a blessing. The institutions of God are his appointed means of grace, and with his institutions he hath promised his blessing; Exod. xx. 24. "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." For the same reason, we may conclude, that God will meet his people and bless them, waiting upon him not only in appointed *places*, but at appointed times, and in all appointed ways. Christ hath promised, that where two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them, Matt. xviii. 20. One thing included in the expression, *in his name*, is, that it is by his appointment, and according to his institution.

God hath made it our duty, by his institution, to set apart this day for a special seeking of his grace and blessing. From which we may argue, that he will be especially ready to confer his grace on those who thus seek it. If it be the day on which God requires us especially to seek him, we may argue, that it is a day on which especially he will be found. That God is ready on this day especially to bestow his blessing on them that keep it aright, is implied in that expression of *God's blessing the Sabbath-day*. God hath not only hallowed the Sabbath-day, but blessed it; he hath given his blessing to it, and will confer his blessing upon all the due observers of it. He hath hallowed it, or appointed that it be kept holy by us, and hath blessed it; he hath determined to give his blessing upon it.

So that here is great encouragement for us to keep holy the sabbath, as we would seek God's grace and our own spiritual good. The Sabbath-day is an accepted time, a day of salvation, a time wherein God especially loves to be sought, and loves to be found. The Lord Jesus Christ takes delight in his own day; he delights to honour it; he delights to meet with and manifest himself to his disciples on it, as he showed before his ascension, by appearing to them from time to time on this day. On this day, he delights to give his Holy Spirit, as he intimated by choosing it as the day on which to pour out the Spirit in so remarkable a manner on the primitive church, and on which to give his Spirit to the apostle John.

Of old, God blessed the seventh day, or appointed it to be a day whereon especially he would bestow blessings on his people, as an expression of his own joyful remembrance of that day, and of the rest and refreshment which he had on it. Exod. xxxi. 16, 17. "Wherefore the children of Israel shall

keep the sabbath.—For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed." As princes give gifts on their birth-days, on their marriage-days, and the like; so God was wont to dispense spiritual gifts on the seventh day.

But how much more reason has Christ to bless the day of his resurrection, and to delight to honour it, and to confer his grace and blessed gifts on his people on this day. It was a day whereon Christ rested and was refreshed in a literal sense. It was a day of deliverance from the chains of death, the day of his finishing that great and difficult work of redemption, which had been upon his heart from all eternity; the day of his justification by the Father; the day of the beginning of his exaltation, and of the fulfilment of the promises of the Father; the day when he had eternal life, which he had purchased, put into his hands.—On this day Christ doth indeed delight to distribute gifts, and blessings, and joy and happiness, and will delight to do the same to the end of the world.

O therefore, how well is it worth our while to improve this day, to call upon God and seek Jesus Christ! Let awakened sinners be stirred up by these things to improve the sabbath-day, as they would lay themselves most in the way of the Spirit of God. Improve this day to call upon God; for then he is near. Improve it for reading the holy scriptures, and diligently attending his word preached; for then is the likeliest time to have the Spirit accompanying it. Let the saints who are desirous of growing in grace, and enjoying communion with Christ, improve the sabbath in order to it.

(5) The last motive which I shall mention, is the experience of the influence which a strict observance of the sabbath has upon the whole of religion. It may be observed, that in those places where the sabbath is well kept, religion in general will be most flourishing; and that in those places where the sabbath is not much noticed, and much is not made of it, there is no great matter of religion any way.—But,

Inq. How ought we to keep the sabbath?

Ans. 1. We ought to be exceedingly careful on this day to abstain from sin. Indeed, all breaches of the sabbath are sinful; but we speak now of those things which are in themselves sinful, or sinful upon other accounts, besides that they are done upon the sabbath. The sabbath being holy time, it is especially defiled by the commission of sin. Sin by being committed on this day, becomes the more exceeding sinful. We are required to abstain from sin at all times, but especially on holy time. The commission of immoralities on the sabbath is the worst way of profaning it, that which most provokes God, and brings most guilt upon the souls of men.

How provoking must it be to God, when men do those things on that day—which he has sanctified, and set apart to be spent in the immediate exercises of religion—which are not fit to be done on common days, which are impure and wicked whenever they are done!

Therefore, if any persons be guilty of any such wickedness, as intemperance or any unclean actions, they do in a very horrid manner profane the sabbath. Or if they be guilty of wickedness in speech, of talking profanely, or in an unclean and lascivious manner, or of talking against their neighbours, they do in a dreadful manner profane the sabbath. Yet very commonly those who are used to such things on week-days, have not a conscience to restrain them on the sabbath. It is well if those that live in the indulgence of the lust of uncleanness on week-days, be not some way or other unclean on the sabbath. They will be indulging the same lusts then; they will be indulging their impure flames in their imaginations at least; and it is well if they keep clear while in the house of God, and while they pretend to be worshipping God. The unclean young man gives this account of himself, Prov. v. 14. "I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and the assembly." So those who are addicted to an impure way of talking in the week-time, have nothing to keep them from the same upon the sabbath, when they meet together. But dreadfully is God provoked by such things.

We ought carefully to watch over our own hearts, and to avoid all sinful thoughts on the sabbath. We ought to maintain such a reverence for the sabbath, as to have a peculiar dread of sin, such as shall awe us to a very careful watch over ourselves.

2. We ought to be careful to abstain from all worldly concerns. The reason, as we have showed, why it is needful and proper that certain stated parts of time should be set apart to be devoted to religious exercises, is because the state of mankind is such in this world, that they are necessitated to exercise their minds, and employ their thoughts about secular matters. It is therefore convenient that there should be stated times, wherein all should be obliged to throw by all other concerns, that their minds may the more freely and with less entanglement, be engaged in religious and spiritual exercises.

We are therefore to do thus, or else we frustrate the very design of the institution of a sabbath. We are strictly to abstain from being outwardly engaged in any worldly thing, either worldly business or recreations. We are to rest in remembrance of God's rest from the work of creation, and of Christ's rest from the work of redemption. We should be careful that we do not encroach upon the sabbath at its beginning, by busying ourselves about the world after the sabbath is begun. We

should avoid talking about worldly matters, and even thinking about them; for whether we outwardly concern ourselves with the world or not, yet if our minds be upon it, we frustrate the end of the sabbath. The end of its separation from other days is, that our minds may be disengaged from worldly things; and we are to avoid being outwardly concerned with the world, only for this reason, that *that* cannot be without taking up our minds.—We ought therefore to give the world no place in our thoughts on the sabbath, but to abstract ourselves from all worldly concerns, and maintain a watch over ourselves, that the world do not encroach, as it is very apt to do. Isaiah lviii. 13, 14.

3. We ought to spend the time in religious exercises. This is the more ultimate end of the sabbath. We are to keep our minds separate from the world, principally for this end, that we may be the more free for religious exercises.—Though it be a day of rest, yet it was not designed to be a day of idleness. To rest from worldly employments, without employing ourselves about any thing, is but to lay ourselves so much more in the devil's way. The mind will be employed some way or other; and therefore, doubtless the end for which we are to call off our minds from worldly things on the sabbath is, that we may employ them about things that are better.

We are to attend on spiritual exercises with the greatest diligence. That it is a day of rest, doth not hinder us in so doing; for we are to look on spiritual exercises but as the rest and refreshment of the soul. In heaven, where the people of God have the most perfect rest, they are not idle, but are employed in spiritual and heavenly exercises.—We should take care therefore to employ our minds on a sabbath-day on spiritual objects by holy meditation; improving for our help therein the holy scriptures, and other books that are according to the word of God. We should also employ ourselves outwardly on this day in the duties of divine worship, in public and private. It is proper to be more frequent and abundant in secret duties on this day, than on other days, as we have time and opportunity, as well as to attend on public ordinances.

It is proper on this day, not only especially to promote the exercise of religion in ourselves, but also in others; to be assisting them, and endeavouring to promote their spiritual good, by religious conference.—Especially those who have the care of others ought, on this day, to endeavour to promote their spiritual good: heads of families should be instructing and counselling their children, and quickening them in the ways of religion, and should see to it that the sabbath be strictly kept in their houses. A peculiar blessing may be expected upon

those families where there is due care taken that the sabbath be strictly and devoutly observed.

4. We are on this day especially to meditate upon, and celebrate the work of redemption. We are with special joy to remember the resurrection of Christ; because that was the finishing of that work. And this is the day whereon Christ rested and was refreshed, after he had endured those extreme labours which he endured for our perishing souls. This was the day of the gladness of Christ's heart; it was the day of his deliverance from the chains of death, and also of our deliverance: for we are delivered in him who is our head. He, as it were, rose with his elect. He is the first-fruits; those that are Christ's will follow. Christ, when he rose, was justified as a public person, and we are justified in him. This is the day of our deliverance out of Egypt.

We should therefore meditate on this with joy; we should have a sympathy with Christ in his joy. As he was refreshed on this day, so we should be refreshed, as those whose hearts are united with his. When Christ rejoices, it becomes all his church every where to rejoice.—We are to say of this day, "This is the day that the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

But we are not only to commemorate the resurrection of Christ, but the whole work of redemption, of which this was the finishing. We keep the day on which the work was finished, because it is in remembrance of the whole work.—We should on this day contemplate the wonderful love of God and of Christ, as expressed in the work of redemption; and our remembrance of these things should be accompanied with suitable exercises of soul with respect to them. When we call to mind the love of Christ, it should be with a return of love on our part. When we commemorate this work, it should be with faith in the Saviour. And we should praise God and the Lamb for this work, for the divine glory and love manifested in it, in our private and public prayers, in talking of the wonderful works of God, and in singing divine songs.

Hence it is proper that Christ's disciples should choose this day to come together to break bread, or to celebrate the ordinance of the Lord's supper, (Acts xx. 7.) because it is an ordinance instituted in remembrance of the work of redemption.

5. Works of mercy and charity are very proper and acceptable to Christ on this day. They were proper on the ancient sabbath. Christ was wont to do such works on the sabbath-day. But they especially become the Christian sabbath, because it is a day kept in commemoration of the greatest work of mercy and love towards us that ever was wrought. What can be more proper, than that on such a day we should be expressing our

love and mercy towards our fellow-creatures, and especially our fellow-christians. Christ loves to see us show our thankfulness to him in such ways as these. Therefore we find that the Holy Ghost was especially careful, that such works should be performed on the first day of the week in the primitive church, as we learn by our text.

SERMON XVI.*

A DIVINE AND SUPERNATURAL LIGHT, IMMEDIATELY IMPARTED TO THE SOUL BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD, SHOWN TO BE BOTH A SCRIPTURAL AND RATIONAL DOCTRINE.

MATT. XVI. 17.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

CHRIST addresses these words to Peter upon occasion of his professing his faith in him as the Son of God. Our Lord was inquiring of his disciples, whom men said that he was; not that he needed to be informed, but only to introduce and give occasion to what follows. They answer, that some said he was John the Baptist, and some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. When they had thus given an account whom others said that he was, Christ asks them, whom they said that he was? Simon Peter, whom we find always zealous and forward, was the first to answer: he readily replied to the question, *Thou art Christ the Son of the living God.*

Upon this occasion, Christ says as he does *to* him and *of* him in the text: in which we may observe,

1. That Peter is pronounced blessed on this account.—*Blessed art thou*—"Thou art an happy man, that thou art not ignorant of this, that I am *Christ, the Son of the living God.* Thou art distinguishingly happy. Others are blinded, and have dark and deluded apprehensions, as you have now given an account, some thinking that I am Elias, and some that I am Jeremias, and some one thing, and some another: but none of them thinking right all of them are misled.

* Preached at Northampton, and published at the desire of some of the hearers, in the year 1734.

Happy art thou, that art so distinguished as to know the truth in this matter."

2. The evidence of this his happiness declared, *viz.* That God, and he *only*, had *revealed it* to him. This is an evidence of his being *blessed*.

First. As it shows how peculiarly favoured he was of God above others; *q. d.* "How highly favoured art thou, that others, wise and great men, the scribes, Pharisees, and rulers, and the nation in general, are left in darkness, to follow their own misguided apprehensions; and that thou shouldst be singled out, as it were, by name, that my heavenly Father should thus set his love on *thee, Simon Bar-jona*.—This argues thee *blessed*, that thou shouldst thus be the object of God's distinguishing love."

Secondly. It evidences his blessedness also, as it intimates that this knowledge is above any that *flesh* and *blood* can *reveal*. "This is such knowledge as only my *Father which is in heaven* can give. It is too high and excellent to be communicated by such means as other knowledge is. Thou art *blessed*, that thou knowest what God alone can teach thee."

The original of this knowledge is here declared, both negatively and positively. *Positively*, as God is here declared the author of it. *Negatively*, as it is declared, that *flesh and blood* had *not revealed it*. God is the author of all knowledge and understanding whatsoever. He is the author of all moral prudence, and of the skill that men have in their secular business. Thus it is said of all in Israel that were *wise-hearted*, and skilled in embroidering, that God had *filled* them *with the spirit of wisdom*. Exod. xxviii. 3.

God is the author of such knowledge; yet so that *flesh and blood reveals it*. Mortal men are capable of imparting the knowledge of human arts and sciences, and skill in temporal affairs. God is the author of such knowledge by those means: *flesh and blood* is employed as the *mediate* or *second* cause of it; he conveys it by the power and influence of natural means. But this spiritual knowledge, spoken of in the text, is what God is the author of, and none else: he *reveals it*, and *flesh and blood reveals it not*. He imparts this knowledge immediately, not making use of any intermediate natural causes, as he does in other knowledge.

What had passed in the preceding discourse naturally occasioned Christ to observe this; because the disciples had been telling how others did not know him, but were generally mistaken about him, divided and confounded in their opinions of him: but Peter had declared his assured faith, that he was the *Son of God*. Now it was natural to observe, how it was not *flesh and blood* that had *revealed it to him*, but God; for if this knowledge were dependent on natural causes or means,

how came it to pass that they, a company of poor fishermen, illiterate men, and persons of low education, attained to the knowledge of the truth; while the Scribes and Pharisees, men of vastly higher advantages, and greater knowledge and sagacity, in other matters, remained in ignorance? This could be owing only to the gracious distinguishing influence and revelation of the Spirit of God. Hence, what I would make the subject of my present discourse, from these words, is this

DOCTRINE.

That there is such a thing as a spiritual and divine light, immediately imparted to the soul by God, of a different nature from any that is obtained by natural means. And on this subject I would,

I. Show what this divine light is.

II. How it is given immediately by God, and not obtained by natural means.

III. Show the truth of the doctrine.

And then conclude with a brief improvement.

I. I would show what this spiritual and divine light is. And in order to it would show,

First, In a few things, what it is not. And here,

1. Those convictions that natural men may have of their sin and misery, is not this spiritual and divine light. Men, in a natural condition, may have convictions of the guilt that lies upon them, and of the anger of God, and their danger of divine vengeance. Such convictions are from the light of truth. That some sinners have a greater conviction of their guilt and misery than others, is because some have more light, or more of an apprehension of truth than others. And this light and conviction may be from the Spirit of God; the Spirit convinces men of sin; but yet nature is much more concerned in it than in the communication of that spiritual and divine light that is spoken of in the doctrine; it is from the Spirit of God only as assisting natural principles, and not as infusing any new principles. Common grace differs from special, in that it influences only by assisting of nature; and not by imparting grace, or bestowing any thing above nature. The light that is obtained, is wholly natural, or of no superior kind to what mere nature attains to, though more of that kind be obtained than would be obtained, if men were left wholly to themselves; or, in other words, common grace only assists the faculties of the soul to do that more fully which they do by nature, as natural conscience or reason will by mere nature make a man sensible of guilt, and will accuse and condemn

him when he has done amiss. Conscience is a principle natural to men; and the work that it doth naturally, or of itself, is to give an apprehension of right and wrong, and to suggest to the mind the relation that there is between right and wrong and a retribution. The Spirit of God, in those convictions which unregenerate men sometimes have, assists conscience to do this work in a further degree than it would do if they were left to themselves. He helps it against those things that tend to stupify it, and obstruct its exercise. But in the renewing and sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, those things are wrought in the soul that are above nature, and of which there is nothing of the like kind in the soul by nature; and they are caused to exist in the soul habitually, and according to such a stated constitution or law, that lays such a foundation for exercises in a continued course, as is called a principle of nature. Not only are remaining principles assisted to do their work more freely and fully, but those principles are restored that were utterly destroyed by the fall; and the mind thenceforward habitually exerts those acts that the dominion of sin had made it as wholly destitute of as a dead body is of vital acts.

The Spirit of God acts in a very different manner in the one case, from what he doth in the other. He may, indeed, act upon the mind of a natural man, but he acts in the mind of a saint as an indwelling vital principle. He acts upon the mind of an unregenerate person as an extrinsic occasional agent; for, in acting upon them, he doth not unite himself to them: for, notwithstanding all his influences that they may possess, they are still sensual, having not the Spirit. Jude 19. But he unites himself with the mind of a saint, takes him for his temple, actuates and influences him as a new supernatural principle of life and action. There is this difference, that the Spirit of God, in acting in the soul of a godly man, exerts and communicates himself there in his own proper nature. Holiness is the proper nature of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit operates in the minds of the godly, by uniting himself to them, and living in them, and exerting his own nature in the exercise of their faculties. The Spirit of God may act upon a creature, and yet not in acting communicate himself. The Spirit of God may act upon inanimate creatures; as, *the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters*, in the beginning of the creation; so the Spirit of God may act upon the minds of men many ways, and communicate himself no more than when he acts upon an inanimate creature. For instance, he may excite thoughts in them, may assist their natural reason and understanding, or may assist other natural principles, and this without any union with the soul, but may act, as it were, upon an external object. But as he acts in his

holy influences and spiritual operations, he acts in a way of peculiar communication of himself; so that the subject is thence denominated spiritual.

2. This spiritual and divine light does not consist in any impression made upon the imagination. It is no impression upon the mind, as though one saw any thing with the bodily eyes. It is no imagination or idea of an outward light or glory, or any beauty of form or countenance, or a visible lustre or brightness of any object. The imagination may be strongly impressed with such things; but this is not spiritual light. Indeed when the mind has a lively discovery of spiritual things, and is greatly affected with the power of divine light, it may, and probably very commonly doth, much affect the imagination; so that impressions of an outward beauty or brightness may *accompany* those spiritual discoveries. But spiritual light is not that impression upon the imagination, but an exceedingly different thing. Natural men may have lively impressions on their imaginations; and we cannot determine but that the devil, who transforms himself into an angel of light, may cause imaginations of an outward beauty, or visible glory, and of sounds and speeches, and other such things; but these are things of a vastly inferior nature to spiritual light.

3. This spiritual light is not the suggesting of any new truths or propositions not contained in the word of God. This suggesting of new truths or doctrines to the mind, independent of any antecedent revelations of those propositions, either in word or writing, is inspiration; such as the prophets and apostles had, and such as some enthusiasts pretend to. But this spiritual light that I am speaking of, is quite a different thing from inspiration. It reveals no new doctrine, it suggests no new proposition to the mind, it teaches no new thing of God, or Christ, or another world, not taught in the Bible, but only gives a due apprehension of those things that are taught in the word of God.

4. It is not every affecting view that men have of religious things that is this spiritual and divine light. Men by mere principles of nature are capable of being affected with things that have a special relation to religion as well as other things. A person by mere nature, for instance, may be liable to be affected with the story of Jesus Christ, and the sufferings he underwent, as well as by any other tragical story. He may be the more affected with it from the interest he conceives mankind to have in it. Yea, he may be affected with it without believing it; as well as a man may be affected with what he reads in a romance, or sees acted in a stage-play. He may be affected with a lively and eloquent description of many pleasant things that attend the state of the blessed in heaven, as well as his imagination be entertained by a romantic

description of the pleasantness of fairy land, or the like. And a common belief of the truth of such things, from education or otherwise, may help forward their affection. We read in Scripture of many that were greatly affected with things of a religious nature, who yet are there represented as wholly graceless, and many of them very ill men. A person therefore may have affecting views of the things of religion, and yet be very destitute of spiritual light. Flesh and blood may be the author of this; one man may give another an affecting view of divine things with but common assistance; but God alone can give a spiritual discovery of them.—But I proceed to show,

Secondly, Positively what this spiritual and divine light is.

And it may be thus described: A true sense of the divine excellency of the things revealed in the word of God, and a conviction of the truth and reality of them thence arising. This spiritual light primarily consists in the former of these, *viz.* A real sense and apprehension of the divine excellency of things revealed in the word of God. A spiritual and saving conviction of the truth and reality of these things, arises from such a sight of their divine excellency and glory; so that this conviction of their truth is an effect and natural consequence of this sight of their divine glory. There is therefore in this spiritual light,

1. A true sense of the divine and superlative excellency of the things of religion; a real sense of the excellency of God and Jesus Christ, and of the work of redemption, and the ways and works of God revealed in the gospel. There is a divine and superlative glory in these things; an excellency that is of a vastly higher kind, and more sublime nature than in other things; a glory greatly distinguishing them from all that is earthly and temporal. He that is spiritually enlightened truly apprehends and sees it, or has a sense of it. He does not merely rationally believe that God is glorious, but he has a sense of the gloriousness of God in his heart. There is not only a rational belief that God is holy, and that holiness is a good thing, but there is a sense of the loveliness of God's holiness. There is not only a speculatively judging that God is gracious, but a sense how amiable God is on account of the beauty of this divine attribute.

There is a twofold knowledge of good of which God has made the mind of man capable. The first, that which is merely notional; as when a person only speculatively judges that any thing is, which, by the agreement of mankind, is called good or excellent, *viz.* that which is most to general advantage, and between which and a reward there is a suitableness,—and the like. And the other is, that which consists in the sense of the heart; as when the heart is sensible of

pleasure and delight in the presence of the idea of it. In the former is exercised merely the speculative faculty, or the understanding, in distinction from the will or disposition of the soul. In the latter, the will, or inclination, or heart, are mainly concerned.

Thus there is a difference between having an *opinion*, that God is holy and gracious, and having a *sense* of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense of its sweetness. A man may have the former, that knows not how honey tastes; but a man cannot have the latter unless he has an idea of the taste of honey in his mind. So there is a difference between believing that a person is beautiful, and having a sense of his beauty. The former may be obtained by hearsay, but the latter only by seeing the countenance. When the heart is sensible of the beauty and amiableness of a thing, it necessarily feels pleasure in the apprehension. It is implied in a person's being heartily sensible of the loveliness of a thing, that the idea of it is pleasant to his soul; which is a far different thing from having a rational opinion that it is excellent.

2. There arises from this sense of the divine excellency of things contained in the word of God, a conviction of the truth and reality of them; and that, either indirectly or directly.

First, Indirectly, and that two ways:

1. As the prejudices of the heart, against the truth of divine things, are hereby removed; so that the mind becomes susceptive of the due force of rational arguments for their truth. The mind of man is naturally full of prejudices against divine truth. It is full of enmity against the doctrines of the gospel; which is a disadvantage to those arguments that prove their truth, and causes them to lose their force upon the mind. But when a person has discovered to him the divine excellency of Christian doctrines, this destroys the enmity, removes those prejudices, sanctifies the reason, and causes it to lie open to the force of arguments for their truth.

Hence was the different effect that Christ's miracles had to convince the disciples, from what they had to convince the scribes and Pharisees. Not that they had a stronger reason, or had their reason more improved; but their reason was sanctified, and those blinding prejudices, that the Scribes and Pharisees were under, were removed by the sense they had of the excellency of Christ, and his doctrine.

It not only removes the hinderances of reason, but positively helps reason. It makes even the speculative notions more lively. It engages the attention of the mind, with more fixedness and intenseness to that kind of objects; which

causes it to have a clearer view of them, and enables it more clearly to see their mutual relations, and occasions it to take more notice of them. The ideas themselves that otherwise are dim and obscure, are by this means impressed with the greater strength, and have a light cast upon them; so that the mind can better judge of them. As he that beholds objects on the face of the earth, when the light of the sun is cast upon them, is under greater advantage to discern them in their true forms and natural relations, than he that sees them in a dim twilight.

The mind, being sensible of the excellency of divine objects, dwells upon them with delight; and the powers of the soul are more awakened and enlivened to employ themselves in the contemplation of them, and exert themselves more fully and much more to the purpose. The beauty of the objects draws on the faculties, and draws forth their exercises; so that reason itself is under far greater advantages for its proper and free exercises, and to attain its proper end, free of darkness and delusion.—But,

Secondly, A true sense of the divine excellency of the things of God's word doth more directly and immediately convince us of their truth; and that because the excellency of these things is so superlative. There is a beauty in them so divine and godlike, that it greatly and evidently distinguishes them from things merely human, or that of which men are the inventors and authors; a glory so high and great, that when clearly seen, commands assent to their divine reality. When there is an actual and lively discovery of this beauty and excellency, it will not allow of any such thought as that it is the fruit of men's invention. This is a kind of intuitive and immediate evidence. They believe the doctrines of God's word to be divine, because they see a divine, and transcendent, and most evidently distinguishing glory in them; such a glory as, if clearly seen, does not leave room to doubt of their being of God, and not of men.

Such a conviction of the truths of religion as this, arising from a sense of their divine excellency, is included in saving faith. And this original of it, is that by which it is most essentially distinguished from that common assent, of which unregenerate men are capable.

II. I proceed now to the *second* thing proposed, *viz.* To shew how this light is immediately given by God, and not obtained by natural means.* And here,

* In the preceding statement and the following explanation, our author might have rendered the subject of "divine light immediately imparted to the soul" more perspicuous, by a fuller use of that *analogy* which the scripture

1. It is not intended that the natural faculties are not used in it. They are the subject of this light: and in such a manner, that they are not merely passive, but active in it. God, in letting in this light into the soul, deals with man according to his nature, and makes use of his rational faculties. But yet this light is not the less immediately from God for that; the faculties are made use of as the subject, and not as the cause. As the use we make of our eyes in beholding various objects, when the sun arises, is not the cause of the light that discovers those objects to us.

2. It is not intended that outward means have no concern in this affair. It is not in this affair, as in inspiration, where new truths are suggested; for, by this light is given only a due apprehension of the same truths that are revealed in the

holds forth, between the common theory of vision and the doctrine he defends. Let the remarks which follow be candidly considered.

1. In the sacred scriptures, God is represented as "the Father of lights," and Christ as "the sun of righteousness." Yea, it is asserted, that "God is LIGHT," and that "he shines into the heart." These and similar expressions, with which the Old and New Testament abound, show that there is a strong analogy between light in the natural world, and something spiritual that is expressed by the same term.

2. As the light of day proceeds from the natural sun, and shines into the eye; so the spiritual or supernatural light proceeds from God, and shines into the heart, or *mind*. Thus the analogy holds, not only as to the *things* intended—in their sources, and their emanations—but also as to the *organs* of reception.

3. The *existence* of light in the eye depends neither on the *perception* of it, nor on any external *object*. Our *perception* of illuminated objects is the *effect* of light's existence in the organ of vision. Without light, both in the eye, and on the object to be seen, there can be no perception of that object. In like manner, the existence of that light which emanates from God, and shines into the mind, is there (that is, in the mind,) prior to, and independent of the mental perception of it; and consequently is there irrespective of the knowledge of objects to be known by it.—Therefore,

4. Knowledge can be called "light" only in a *secondary* sense, both naturally and spiritually; that is, by a metonymy, because it is the *effect* of light. We *know* a visible object, because we see it; and we see it, because light shines both on the object, and into the eye. It is by divine light shining into the mind that we have a spiritual knowledge of God, of Christ, or of any other object; in other words, a holy emanation or influence from God, called light, is the cause why any person or thing is known in a spiritual manner.

5. When any identify this divine *light*, these rays of the sun of righteousness, with knowledge, (however spiritual and excellent,) because the latter is metonymically called "light," they are chargeable with identifying cause and effect, and therefore of confounding things which essentially differ. For spiritual *light*, in the primary and proper sense, emanates immediately from God, as rays from the sun; but this cannot be said of knowledge, because the perception of an object, which is our act, must intervene. Knowledge presupposes the primary light, and is also dependent on the objective truths perceived. All knowledge, whether natural or spiritual, stands essentially related to objects known; so that without those objects it can have no existence. The knowledge of objects to be seen, therefore, is the effect of *two causes* concurring, the object itself and light; whereas the "divine light which is immediately imparted to the soul," has but *one cause*, even the sovereign will of God.

6. *Coroll.* The theological notion which makes all spiritual light in man to consist in knowledge, and which is become too fashionable in the present day, is contrary to scripture, and to rational analogy.—W.

word of God: and therefore it is not given without the word. The gospel is employed in this affair. This light is the "light of the glorious gospel of Christ." 2 Cor. iv. 4. The gospel is as a glass, by which this light is conveyed to us. 1 Cor. xiii. 12. "Now we see through a glass."——But,

3. When it is said that this light is given immediately by God, and not obtained by natural means, hereby is intended, that it is given by God without making use of any means that operate by their own power or natural force. God makes use of means; but it is not as mediate causes to produce this effect. There are not truly any second causes of it; but it is produced by God immediately. The word of God is no proper cause of this effect; but is made use of only to convey to the mind the subject-matter of this saving instruction: And this indeed it doth convey to us by natural force or influence. It conveys to our minds these doctrines; it is the cause of a notion of them in our heads, but not of the sense of their divine excellency in our hearts. Indeed a person cannot have spiritual light without the word. But that does not argue, that the word properly causes that light. The mind cannot see the excellency of any doctrine, unless that doctrine be first in the mind; but seeing the excellency of the doctrine may be immediately from the Spirit of God; though the conveying of the doctrine, or proposition, itself, may be by the word. So that the notions which are the subject-matter of this light, are conveyed to the mind by the word of God; but that due sense of the heart, wherein this light formally consists, is immediately by the Spirit of God. As, for instance, the notion that there is a Christ, and that Christ is holy and gracious, is conveyed to the mind by the word of God: But the sense of the excellency of Christ, by reason of that holiness and grace, is, nevertheless, immediately the work of the Holy Spirit.—I come now,

III. To show the truth of the doctrine; that is, to show that there is such a thing as that spiritual light that has been described, thus immediately let into the mind by God. And here I would show, briefly, that this doctrine is both *scriptural* and *rational*.

First, It is scriptural. My text is not only full to the purpose, but it is a doctrine with which the Scripture abounds. We are there abundantly taught, that the saints differ from the ungodly in this; that they have the knowledge of God, and a sight of God, and of Jesus Christ. I shall mention but few texts out of many: 1 John iii. 6. "Whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him, nor known him." 3 John 11. "He that doeth good, is of God: but he that doeth evil, hath not seen God." John xiv. 19. "The world seeth me no more; but ye see

me." John xvii. 3. "And this is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." This knowledge, or sight of God and Christ, cannot be a mere speculative knowledge; because it is spoken of as that wherein they differ from the ungodly. And by these scriptures, it must not only be a different knowledge in degree and circumstances, and different in its effects, but it must be entirely different in nature and kind.

And this light and knowledge is always spoken of as immediately given of God; Matt. xi. 25—27. "At that time, Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Here this effect is ascribed exclusively to the arbitrary operation and gift of God bestowing this knowledge on whom he will, and distinguishing those with it who have the least natural advantage or means for knowledge, even babes, when it is denied to the wise and prudent. And imparting this knowledge, is here appropriated to the Son of God, as his sole prerogative. And again, 2 Cor. iv. 6. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." This plainly shows, that there is a discovery of the divine superlative glory and excellency of God and Christ, peculiar to the saints: and, also, that it is as immediately from God, as light from the sun: and that it is the immediate effect of his power and will. For it is compared to God's creating the light by his powerful word in the beginning of the creation; and is said to be by the Spirit of the Lord, in the 18th verse of the preceding chapter. God is spoken of as giving the knowledge of Christ in conversion, as of what before was hidden and unseen; Gal. i. 15, 16. "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his son in me." The scripture also speaks plainly of such a knowledge of the word of God, as has been described as the immediate gift of God; Psalm cxix. 18. "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." What could the Psalmist mean, when he begged of God to open his eyes? Was he ever blind? Might he not have resort to the law, and see every word and sentence in it when he pleased? And what could he mean by those wondrous things? Were they the wonderful stories of the creation, and deluge, and Israel's passing through the Red Sea, and the like? Were not his eyes open to read these

strange things when he would? Doubtless, by wondrous things in God's law, he had respect to those distinguishing and wonderful excellencies, and marvellous manifestations of the divine perfections and glory contained in the commands and doctrines of the word, and those works and counsels of God that were there revealed. So the scripture speaks of a knowledge of God's dispensation, and covenant of mercy, and way of grace towards his people, as peculiar to the saints, and given only by God; Psalm xxv. 14. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant."

And that a true and saving belief of the truth of religion is that which arises from such a discovery, is, also, what the scripture teaches. As John vi. 40. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life;" where it is plain that a true faith is what arises from a spiritual sight of Christ. And John xvii. 6, 7, 8. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Now, they have known, that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely, that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me;" where Christ's manifesting God's name to the disciples, or giving them the knowledge of God, was that whereby they knew that Christ's doctrine was of God, and that Christ himself proceeded from him, and was sent by him. Again, John xii. 44, 45, 46. "Jesus cried, and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me, should not abide in darkness." Their believing in Christ, and spiritually seeing him, are parallel.

Christ condemns the Jews, that they did not know that he was the Messiah, and that his doctrine was true, from an inward distinguishing taste and relish of what was divine, in Luke xii. 56, 57. He having there blamed the Jews, that, though they could discern the face of the sky and of the earth, and signs of the weather, that yet they could not discern those times—or, as it is expressed in Matthew, the signs of those times—adds, "yea, and why even of your ownselves, judge ye not what is right?" *i. e.* without extrinsic signs. Why have ye not that sense of true excellency, whereby ye may distinguish that which is holy and divine? Why have ye not that savour of the things of God, by which you may see the distinguishing glory, and evident divinity of me and my doctrine?

The apostle Peter mentions it as what gave him and his companions good and well-grounded assurance of the truth of

the gospel, that they had seen the divine glory of Christ. 2 Pet. i. 16. "For we have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty." The apostle has respect to that visible glory of Christ which they saw in his transfiguration. That glory was so divine, having such an ineffable appearance and semblance of divine holiness, majesty, and grace, that it evidently denoted him to be a divine person. But if a sight of Christ's outward glory might give a rational assurance of his divinity, why may not an apprehension of his spiritual glory do so too? Doubtless Christ's spiritual glory is in itself as distinguishing, and as plainly shows his divinity, as his outward glory,—nay, a great deal more, for his spiritual glory is that wherein his divinity consists; and the outward glory of his transfiguration showed him to be divine, only as it was a remarkable image or representation of that spiritual glory. Doubtless, therefore, he that has had a clear sight of the spiritual glory of Christ, may say, I have not followed cunningly-devised fables, but have been an eye-witness of his majesty, upon as good grounds as the apostle, when he had respect to the outward glory of Christ that he had seen. But this brings me to what was proposed next, *viz.* to show that,

Secondly, This doctrine is rational.

1. It is rational to suppose, that there is really such an excellency in divine things—so transcendent and exceedingly different from what is in other things—that if it were seen, would most evidently distinguish them. We cannot rationally doubt but that things divine, which appertain to the supreme Being, are vastly different from things that are human; that there is a high, glorious, and god-like excellency in them, that does most remarkably difference them from the things that are of men; insomuch that if the difference were but seen, it would have a convincing, satisfying influence upon any one, that they are divine. What reason can be offered against it? unless we would argue, that God is not remarkably distinguished in glory from men.

If Christ should now appear to any one as he did on the mount at his transfiguration; or if he should appear to the world in his heavenly glory, as he will do at the day of judgment; without doubt, his glory and majesty would be such as would satisfy every one, that he was a divine person, and that his religion was true: and it would be a most reasonable, and well grounded conviction too. And why may there not be that stamp of divinity, or divine glory on the word of God, on the scheme and doctrine of the gospel, that may be in like manner distinguishing and as rationally convincing, provided it be but seen? It is rational to suppose, that when God speaks to the world,

there should be something in his word vastly different from men's word. Supposing that God never had spoken to the world, but we had notice that he was about to reveal himself from heaven, and speak to us immediately himself, or that he should give us a book of his own inditing; after what manner should we expect that he would speak? Would it not be rational to suppose, that his speech would be exceeding different from men's speech, that there should be such an excellency and sublimity in his word, such a stamp of wisdom, holiness, majesty, and other divine perfections, that the word of men, yea of the wisest of men, should appear mean and base in comparison of it? Doubtless it would be thought rational to expect this, and unreasonable to think otherwise. When a wise man speaks in the exercise of his wisdom, there is something in every thing he says, that is very distinguishable from the talk of a little child. So, without doubt, and much more is the speech of God, to be distinguished from that of the wisest of men; agreeable to Jer. xxiii. 28, 29. God having there been reproving the false prophets that prophesied in his name, and pretended that what they spake was his word, when indeed it was their own word, says, "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord: and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

2. If there be such a distinguishing excellency in divine things; it is rational to suppose that there may be such a thing as seeing it. What should hinder but that it may be seen? It is no argument, that there is no such distinguishing excellency, or that it cannot be seen, because some do not see it, though they may be discerning men in temporal matters. It is not rational to suppose, if there be any such excellency in divine things, that wicked men should see it. Is it rational to suppose, that those whose minds are full of spiritual pollution, and under the power of filthy lusts, should have any relish or sense of divine beauty or excellency; or that their minds should be susceptive of that light that is in its own nature so pure and heavenly? It need not seem at all strange, that sin should so blind the mind, seeing that men's particular natural tempers and dispositions will so much blind them in secular matters; as when men's natural temper is melancholy, jealous, fearful, proud, or the like.

3. It is rational to suppose, that this knowledge should be given immediately by God, and not be obtained by natural means. Upon what account should it seem unreasonable, that there should be any immediate communication between God and the creature? It is strange, that men should make any matter of difficulty of it. Why should not he that made all

things, still have something immediately to do with the things that he has made? Where lies the great difficulty, if we own the being of a God, and that he created all things out of nothing, of allowing some immediate influence of God on the creation still? And if it be reasonable to suppose it with respect to any part of the creation, it is especially so with respect to reasonable, intelligent creatures; who are next to God in the gradation of the different orders of beings, and whose business is most immediately with God; and reason teaches, that man was made to serve and glorify his Creator. And if it be rational to suppose, that God immediately communicates himself to man in any affair, it is in this. It is rational to suppose, that God would reserve that knowledge and wisdom, which is of such a divine and excellent nature, to be bestowed immediately by himself; and that it should not be left in the power of second causes. Spiritual wisdom and grace is the highest and most excellent gift that ever God bestows on any creature; in this, the highest excellency and perfection of a rational creature consists. It is also immensely the most important of all divine gifts: it is that wherein man's happiness consists, and on which his everlasting welfare depends. How rational is it to suppose that God, however he has left lower gifts to second causes, and in some sort in their power, yet should reserve this most excellent, divine, and important of all divine communications, in his own hands, to be bestowed immediately by himself, as a thing too great for second causes to be concerned in. It is rational to suppose, that this blessing should be immediately from God, for there is no gift or benefit that is in itself so nearly related to the divine nature. Nothing which the creature receives, is so much a participation of the Deity; it is a kind of emanation of God's beauty, and is related to God as the light is to the sun. It is, therefore, congruous and fit, that when it is given of God, it should be immediately from himself, and by himself, according to his own sovereign will.

It is rational to suppose, that it should be beyond man's power to obtain this light, by the mere strength of natural reason; for it is not a thing that belongs to reason, to see the beauty and loveliness of spiritual things; it is not a speculative thing, but depends on the sense of the heart. Reason, indeed, is necessary, in order to it, as it is by reason only that we are become the subjects of the means of it; which means, I have already shown to be necessary in order to it, though they have no proper causal influence in the affair. It is by reason that we become possessed of a notion of those doctrines that are the subject matter of this divine light, or knowledge; and reason may many ways be indirectly and remotely an advantage to it. Reason has also to do in the acts that are im-

mediately consequent on this discovery: for, seeing the truth of religion from hence, is by reason; though it be but by one step, and the inference be immediate. So reason has to do in that accepting of, and trusting in Christ, *that* is consequent on it. But if we take *reason* strictly—not for the faculty of mental perception in general, but for ratiocination, or a power of inferring by arguments—the perceiving of spiritual beauty and excellency no more belongs to reason than it belongs to the sense of feeling to perceive colours, or to the power of seeing to perceive the sweetness of food. It is out of reason's province to perceive the beauty or loveliness of any thing: such a perception does not belong to that faculty. Reason's work is to perceive truth and not excellency. It is not ratiocination that gives men the perception of the beauty and amiableness of a countenance, though it may be many ways indirectly an advantage to it; yet it is no more reason that immediately perceives it, than it is reason that perceives the sweetness of honey: it depends on the sense of the heart. Reason may determine that a countenance is beautiful to others, it may determine that honey is sweet to others; but it will never give me a perception of its sweetness.

I will conclude with a very brief improvement of what has been said.

First, This doctrine may lead us to reflect on the goodness of God, that has so ordered it, that a saving evidence of the truth of the gospel is such, as is attainable by persons of mean capacities and advantages, as well as those that are of the greatest parts and learning. If the evidence of the gospel depended only on history, and such reasonings as learned men only are capable of, it would be above the reach of far the greatest part of mankind. But persons with an ordinary degree of knowledge, are capable, without a long and subtile train of reasoning, to see the divine excellency of the things of religion: they are capable of being taught by the Spirit of God, as well as learned men. The evidence that is this way obtained, is vastly better and more satisfying, than all that can be obtained by the arguings of those that are most learned, and greatest masters of reason. And babes are as capable of knowing these things, as the wise and prudent; and they are often hid from these, when they are revealed to those. 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men, after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world."—

Secondly. This doctrine may well put us upon examining ourselves, whether we have ever had this divine light let into our souls. If there be such a thing, doubtless it is of great importance whether we have thus been taught by the Spirit of

God; whether the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, hath shined unto us, giving us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; whether we have seen the Son, and believed on him, or have that faith of gospel doctrines which arises from a spiritual sight of Christ.

Thirdly. All may hence be exhorted, earnestly to seek this spiritual light. To influence and move to it, the following things may be considered.

1. This is the most excellent and divine wisdom that any creature is capable of. It is more excellent than any human learning; it is far more excellent than all the knowledge of the greatest philosophers or statesmen. Yea, the least glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Christ doth more exalt and ennoble the soul, than all the knowledge of those that have the greatest speculative understanding in divinity without grace. This knowledge has the most noble object that can be, *viz.* the divine glory and excellency of God and Christ. The knowledge of these objects is that wherein consists the most excellent knowledge of the angels, yea, of God himself.

2. This knowledge is that which is above all others sweet and joyful. Men have a great deal of pleasure in human knowledge, in studies of natural things; but this is nothing to that joy which arises from this divine light shining into the soul. This light gives a view of those things that are immensely the most exquisitely beautiful, and capable of delighting the eye of the understanding. This spiritual light is the dawning of the light of glory in the heart. There is nothing so powerful as this to support persons in affliction, and to give the mind peace and brightness in this stormy and dark world.

3. This light is such as effectually influences the inclination, and changes the nature of the soul. It assimilates our nature to the divine nature, and changes the soul into an image of the same glory that is beheld. 2 Cor. iii. 18. "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This knowledge will wean from the world, and raise the inclination to heavenly things. It will turn the heart to God as the fountain of good, and to choose him for the only portion. This light, and this only, will bring the soul to a saving close with Christ. It conforms the heart to the gospel, mortifies its enmity and opposition against the scheme of salvation therein revealed; it causes the heart to embrace the joyful tidings, and entirely to adhere to, and acquiesce in, the revelation of Christ as our Saviour; it causes the whole soul to accord and symphonize with it,

admitting it with entire credit and respect, cleaving to it with full inclination and affection; and it effectually disposes the soul to give up itself entirely to Christ.

4. This light, and this only, has its fruit in an universal holiness of life. No merely notional or speculative understanding of the doctrines of religion will ever bring to this. But this light, as it reaches the bottom of the heart, and changes the nature, so it will effectually dispose to an universal obedience. It shows God as worthy to be obeyed and served. It draws forth the heart in a sincere love to God, which is the only principle of a true, gracious, and universal obedience: and it convinces of the reality of those glorious rewards that God has promised to them that obey him.

SERMON XVII.*

THE CHURCH'S MARRIAGE TO HER SONS AND TO HER GOD.

ISAIAH LXII. 4, 5.

Thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

IN the midst of many blessed promises that God makes to his church—in this and the preceding and following chapters—of advancement to a state of great peace, comfort, honour, and joy, after long-continued affliction, we have the sum of all contained in these two verses. In the 4th verse God says to his church, "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah; for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." When it is said, "Thy *land* shall be married," we are to understand "the body of thy people, thy whole race;" the land—by a metonymy, very usual in Scripture—being put for the people that inhabit the land.—The 5th verse explains how this should be accomplished in two things, viz. *in being married to her sons*, and *married to her God.*

I. It is promised that she should be *married to her sons*, or that her sons should marry her: "For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee." Or, as the words might have been more literally translated from the original: "As a young man is married to a virgin, so shall

* Preached at the instalment of the Rev. Samuel Buel, as Pastor of the church and congregation at East Hampton, on Long Island, September 19, 1746.

thy sons be married to thee." Some by this understand a promise, that the posterity of the captivated Jews should return again from Babylon to the land of Canaan, and should be, as it were, married or wedded to their own land; *i. e.* they should be re-united to their own land, and should have great comfort and joy in it, as a young man in a virgin that he marries. But when it is said, "So shall thy sons marry thee," God does not direct his speech to the land itself, but to the church whose land it was; the pronoun *thee* being applied to the same mystical person in this former part of the verse, as in the words immediately following in the latter part of the same sentence, "And as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." It is the church, and not the hills and valleys of the land of Canaan, that is God's bride, or the Lamb's wife. It is also manifest, that when God says, "So shall thy sons marry thee," he continues to speak to her to whom he had spoken in the three preceding verses; but there it is not the land of Canaan, but the church, that he speaks to when he says, "The Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken," &c. And to represent the land itself as a bride, and the subject of espousals and marriage, would be a figure of speech very unnatural, and not known in scripture; but for the church of God to be thus represented is very usual from the beginning to the end of the Bible. And then it is manifest that the return of the Jews to the land of Canaan from the Babylonish captivity, is not the event mainly intended by the prophecy of which these words are a part. That was not the time fulfilled in the 2d verse of this chapter. "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name." That was not the time spoken of in the preceding chapters, with which this chapter is one continued prophecy. That was not the time spoken of in the last words of the foregoing chapter, when the Lord would cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations: nor was it the time spoken of in the 5th, 6th, and 9th verses of that chapter, when "strangers should stand and feed the flocks of God's people, and the sons of the alien should be their ploughmen and vine-dressers: but they should be named the priests of the Lord, and men should call them the ministers of God; when they should eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory boast themselves, and their seed should be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people; and all that should see them

should acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." Nor was that the time spoken of in the chapter preceding that, "when the abundance of the sea should be converted unto the church; when the isles should wait for God, and the ships of Tarshish to bring her sons from far, and their silver and gold with them; when the forces of the Gentiles, and their kings, should be brought; when the church should suck the milk of the Gentiles, and suck the breast of kings; and when that nation and kingdom that would not serve her, should perish, and be utterly wasted: and when the sun should be no more her light by day, neither for brightness should the moon give light unto her, but the Lord should be unto her an everlasting light, and her God her glory; and her sun should no more go down, nor her moon withdraw itself, because the Lord should be her everlasting light, and the days of her mourning should be ended." These things manifestly have respect to the Christian church, in her most perfect and glorious state on earth, in the last ages of the world; when the church should be so far from being confined to the land of Canaan, that she should fill the whole earth, and all lands should be alike holy.

These words in the text, "As a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee," I choose rather, with others, to understand as expressive of the church's union with her faithful pastors, and the great benefits she should receive from them. God's ministers, though they are set to be the instructors, guides, and fathers of God's people, yet are also the sons of the church; Amos ii. 11. "I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites." Such as these, when faithful, are those precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, spoken of, Lam. iv. 2. 7. "Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk. And as he that marries a young virgin, becomes the guide of her youth, so these sons of Zion are represented as taking her by the hand as her guide, Isaiah li. 18. "There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth: neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up." That by these sons of the church is meant ministers of the gospel, is confirmed by the next verse to the text, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem."

That the sons of the church should be married to her as a young man to a virgin, is a mystery not unlike many others held forth in the word of God, concerning the relation between Christ and his people, and their relation to him and to one another. Christ is David's Lord, and yet his son, and both the root and offspring of David. Christ is a son born and a child given, and yet the everlasting Father. The church is Christ's mother, Cant. iii. 11; and viii. 1; and yet his

spouse, his sister, and his child. Believers are Christ's mother, and yet his sister and brother. Ministers are the sons of the church, and yet are her fathers. The apostle speaks of himself, as the father of the members of the church of Corinth, and also the mother of the Galatians, travailing in birth with them, Gal. iv. 19.

2. The second and chief fulfilment of the promise consists in the church being married to Christ: "And, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." Not that we are to understand that the church has many husbands, or that Christ is one husband, and ministers are other husbands, strictly speaking. For though ministers are here spoken of as being married to the church, yet it is not as his competitors, or as standing in a conjugal relation to his bride in any way parallel with his. For the church, properly, has but one husband; she is not an adultress, but a virgin, who is devoted wholly to the Lamb, and who follows him whithersoever he goes. But ministers espouse the church entirely as Christ's ambassadors, as representing him, and standing in his stead, being sent forth by him to be married to her in his name, that by these means she may be married to him. As when a prince marries a foreign lady by proxy, the prince's ambassador marries her, but not in his own name, but in the name of his master, that he may be the instrument of bringing her into a true conjugal relation to him. This is agreeable to what the apostle says, 2 Cor. xi. 2. "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Here the apostle represents himself as being, as it were, the husband of the church of Corinth; for it is the husband that is jealous when the wife commits adultery; and yet he speaks of himself as having espoused them, not in his own name, but in the name of Christ, and for him, and him only, and as his ambassador, sent forth to bring them home a chaste virgin to him. Ministers are in the text represented as married to the church in the same sense that elsewhere they are represented as fathers of the church. The church has but one father, even God, and ministers are fathers as his ambassadors; so the church has but one shepherd, John x. 16. "There shall be one fold and one shepherd;" but yet ministers, as Christ's ambassadors, are often called the church's shepherds or pastors. The church has but one Saviour; but yet ministers, as his ambassadors and instruments, are called her saviours; 1 Tim. iv. 16. "In doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." Obad. 21. "And saviours shall come upon Mount Zion." The church has but one Priest; but yet in Isaiah lxvi. 21, speaking of the ministers of the Gentile nations, it is said, "I will take of them for priests and Levites." The

church has but one Judge, for the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son; yet Christ tells his apostles, that they shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

When the text speaks first of ministers marrying the church, and then of Christ's rejoicing over her as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride; the former is manifestly spoken of as being in order to the latter; even in order to the joy and happiness that the church shall have in her true bridegroom. The preaching of the gospel is in this context spoken of three times successively, as the great means of bringing about the prosperity and joy of the church; once, in the first verse, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth;" and then in the text; and lastly in the two following verses, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night. Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

The text thus opened affords these two propositions, proper for our consideration on the solemn occasion of this day.

I. The uniting of faithful ministers with Christ's people in the ministerial office, when done in a due manner, is like a young man's marrying a virgin.

II. This union of ministers with the people of Christ is in order to their being brought to the blessedness of a more glorious union, in which Christ shall rejoice over them, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride.

I. PROP. The uniting of a faithful minister with Christ's people in the ministerial office, when done in a due manner, is like a young man's marrying a virgin.

I say, the uniting of a faithful minister with Christ's people, and in a due manner; for we must suppose that the promise God makes to the church in the text, relates to such ministers, and such a manner of union with the church; because this is promised to the church as a part of her latter day glory, and as a benefit that should be granted her by God, as the fruit of his great love to her, and an instance of her great spiritual prosperity and happiness in her purest and most excellent state on earth. But it would be no such instance of God's great favour and the church's happiness, to have unfaithful ministers entering into office in an undue and improper manner. They are evidently faith-

ful ministers that are spoken of in the next verse, where the same are doubtless spoken of as in the text; "I have set watchmen on thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night." And they are those that shall be introduced into the ministry at a time of its extraordinary purity, order, and beauty, wherein (as is said in the first, second, and third verses) her "righteousness should go forth as brightness, and the Gentiles should see her righteousness, and all kings her glory, and she should be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of her God."

When I speak of the uniting of a faithful minister with Christ's people in a due manner, I do not mean a due manner only with regard to external order; but its being truly done in a holy manner, with sincere upright aims and intentions, with a right disposition, and proper frames of mind in those that are concerned; and particularly in the minister that takes office, and God's people to whom he is united, each exercising in this affair a proper regard to God and one another.—Such an uniting of a faithful minister with the people of God in the ministerial office, is in some respects like a young man marrying a virgin.

1. When a duly qualified person is properly invested with the ministerial character, and does in a due manner take upon him the sacred work and office of a minister of the gospel, he does, in some sense, espouse the church of Christ in general. For, though he do not properly stand in a pastoral relation to the whole church of Christ through the earth, and is far from becoming an universal pastor; yet thenceforward he has a different concern with the church of Christ in general, and its interests and welfare, than other persons have that are laymen, and should be regarded otherwise by all the members of the Christian church. Wherever he is providentially called to preach the word of God, or minister in holy things, he ought to be received as a minister of Christ, and the messenger of the Lord of Hosts to them. And every one that takes on him this office as he ought to do, espouses the church of Christ, as he espouses the interest of the church in a manner that is peculiar. He is under obligations, as a minister of the Christian Church, beyond other men, to love the church, as Christ her true bridegroom hath loved her, and to prefer Jerusalem above his chief joy, and to imitate Christ, the great shepherd and bishop of souls, and husband of the church, in his care and tender concern for her welfare, and earnest and constant labours to promote it, as he has opportunity. And as he, in taking office, devotes himself to the service of Christ in his church; so he gives himself to the church, to be hers, in that love, tender care, constant endeavour, and earnest labour for her provision, comfort, and welfare, that is

proper to his office as a minister of Providence, as long as he lives; as a young man gives himself to a virgin when he marries her. And the church of Christ in general, as constituted of true saints through the world, (though they do not deliver up themselves to any one particular minister, as universal pastor, yet) cleave to and embrace the ministry of the church with endeared affection, high honour, and esteem, for Christ's sake. They joyfully commit and subject themselves to them; they resolve to honour and help them, to be guided by them and help them so long as in the world; as the bride doth in marriage deliver up herself to her husband. And the ministry in general, or the whole number of faithful ministers, being all united in the same work as fellow helpers to the grace of God, may be considered as one mystical person, that espouses the church as a young man espouses a virgin: as the many elders of the church of Ephesus are represented as one mystical person, Rev. ii. 1, and all called the angel of the church of Ephesus; and as the faithful ministers of Christ in general, all over the world, seem to be represented as one mystical person, and called an angel, Rev. xiv. 6. "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell upon the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."—But,

2. More especially is the uniting of a faithful minister with a particular Christian people, as their pastor, when done in a due manner, like a young man marrying a virgin.—It is so with respect to the union itself, the concomitants of the union, and the fruits of it.

(1.) The *union itself* is in several respects like that which is between a young man and a virgin whom he marries.

It is so with respect to mutual regard and affection. A faithful minister that is in a Christian manner united to a Christian people as their pastor, has his heart united to them in the most ardent and tender affection. And they, on the other hand, have their hearts united to him, esteeming him very highly in love for his works' sake, and receiving him with honour and reverence, and willingly subjecting themselves to him, and committing themselves to his care, as being under Christ, their head and guide.

And such a pastor and people are like a young man and virgin united in marriage, with respect to the purity of their regard one to another. The young man gives himself to his bride in purity, as undebauched by meretricious embraces; and she also presents herself to him a chaste virgin. So in such an union of a minister and people as we are speaking of, the parties united are pure and holy in their affection and regard one to another. The minister's heart is united to the people, not for filthy lucre or any worldly advantage, but with a pure benevolence to them.

and desire of their spiritual welfare and prosperity, and complacence in them as the children of God and followers of Christ Jesus. And, on the other hand, they love and honour him with a holy affection and esteem; and not merely as having their admiration raised, and their carnal affection moved by having their curiosity and other fleshly principles gratified by a florid eloquence, and the excellency of speech and man's wisdom; but receiving him as the messenger of the Lord of Hosts, coming to them on a divine and infinitely important errand, and with those holy qualifications that resemble the virtues of the Lamb of God.

And as the bridegroom and bride give themselves to each other in covenant; so it is in that union we are speaking of between a faithful pastor and a Christian people. The minister, by solemn vows, devotes himself to the people, to improve his time and strength, and spend and be spent for them so long as God, in his providence, shall continue the union: and they, on the other hand, in a holy covenant, commit the care of their souls, and subject themselves to him.

(2.) The union between a faithful minister and a Christian people, is like that between a young man and virgin in their marriage, with respect to the *concomitants* of it.

When such a minister and such a people are thus united, it is attended with great joy. The minister joyfully devoting himself to the service of his Lord in the work of the ministry, as a work that he delights in: and also joyfully uniting himself to the society of the saints that he is set over, as having complacence in them, for his dear Lord's sake, whose people they are; and willingly and joyfully, on Christ's call, undertaking the labours and difficulties of the service of their souls. And they, on the other hand, joyfully receiving him as a precious gift of their ascended Redeemer. Thus a faithful minister and a Christian people are each other's joy, Rom. xv. 32. "That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed." 2 Cor. i. 14. "As you have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye are ours."

Another concomitant of this union, wherein it resembles that which becomes a young man and virgin united in marriage, is mutual helpfulness, and a constant care and endeavour to promote each other's good and comfort. The minister earnestly and continually seeks the profit and comfort of the souls of his people, and to guard and defend them from every thing that might annoy them, and studies and labours to promote their spiritual peace and prosperity. They on the other hand, make it their constant care to promote his comfort, to make the burden of his difficult work easy, to avoid those things that might add to the difficulty of it, and that might justly be grievous to his heart. They do what in them lies to encourage his heart, and

strengthen his hands in his work; and are ready to say to him, when called to exert himself in the more difficult parts of his work, as the people of old to Ezra the priest, when they saw him bowed down under the burden of a difficult affair, Ezra x. 4, "Arise, for this matter belongeth to thee: we, also, will be with thee: Be of good courage, and do it." They spare no pains nor cost to make their pastor's outward circumstances easy and comfortable, and free from pinching necessities and distracting cares, and to put him under the best advantages to follow his great work fully and successfully.

Such a pastor and people, as it is between a couple happily united in a conjugal relation, have a mutual sympathy with each other, a fellow-feeling of each other's burdens and calamities, and a communion in each other's prosperity and joy. When the people suffer in their spiritual interests, the pastor suffers: he is afflicted when he sees their souls in trouble and darkness: he feels their wounds: and he looks on their prosperity and comfort as his own. 2 Cor. xi. 29. "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" 2 Cor. vii. 13. "We were comforted in your comfort." And, on the other hand, the people feel their pastor's burdens, and rejoice in his prosperity and consolations; see Phil. iv. 14, and 2 Cor. ii. 3.

(3.) This union is like that which is between a young man and a virgin in its *fruits*.

One fruit of it is mutual benefit: They become meet helps one for another. The people receive great benefit by the minister, as he is their teacher to communicate spiritual instructions and counsels to them, and is set to watch over them, to defend them from those enemies and calamities they are liable to; and so is, under Christ, to be both their guide and guard, as the husband is of the wife. And, as the husband provides the wife with food and clothing, so the pastor, as Christ's steward, makes provision for his people, and brings forth out of his treasure things new and old, gives every one his portion of meat in due season, and is made the instrument of spiritually clothing and adorning their souls. And, on the other hand, the minister receives benefit from the people, as they minister greatly to his spiritual good by that holy converse to which their union to him as his flock leads them. The conjugal relation leads the persons united therein to the most intimate acquaintance and conversation with each other; so the union there is between a faithful pastor and a Christian people, leads them to intimate conversation about things of a spiritual nature. It leads the people most freely and fully to open the case of their souls to the pastor, and leads him to deal most freely, closely, and thoroughly with them, in things pertaining thereto. And this conversation not only tends to

their benefit, but, also, greatly to *his*. And the pastor receives benefit from the people outwardly, as they take care of, and order his outward accommodations for his support and comfort, and do, as it were, spread and serve his table for him.

Another fruit of this union, wherein it resembles the conjugal, is a spiritual offspring. There is wont to arise from the union of such a pastor and people, a spiritual race of children. These new-born children of God are, in the Scripture, represented both as the children of ministers, as those who have begotten them through the gospel; and, also, as the children of the church, who is represented as their mother that hath brought them forth, and at whose breasts they are nourished; as in Isa. liv. 1, and lxvi. 11. Gal. iv. 26. 1 Pet. ii. 2, and many other places.

Having thus briefly shown, how the uniting of faithful ministers with Christ's people, in the ministerial office, when done in a due manner, is like a young man marrying a virgin, I proceed now to the

II. Prop. *viz.* That this union of ministers with the people of Christ, is in order to their being brought to the blessedness of a more glorious union, in which Christ shall rejoice over them as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride.

1. The saints are, and shall be, the subjects of this blessedness. Of all the various kinds of union, of sensible and temporal things that are used in Scripture, to represent the relation there is between Christ and his church; that which is between bridegroom and bride, or husband and wife, is much the most frequently made use of, both in the Old and New Testament. The Holy Ghost seems to take a peculiar delight in this, as a similitude fit to represent the strict, intimate, and blessed union that is between Christ and his saints. The apostle intimates, that one end why God appointed marriage, and established so near a relation as that between husband and wife, was, that it might be a type of the union that is between Christ and his church; in Eph. v. 30, 31, 32—"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife; and they two shall be one flesh." *For this cause*, i. e. because we are members of Christ's body, of his flesh and of his bones, God appointed that man and wife should be so joined together, as to be one flesh, to represent this high and blessed union between Christ and his church. The apostle explains himself in the next words, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." This institution of marriage, making the man and his wife one flesh, is a great mystery; *i. e.* there is a great and glorious mystery hid in the design of it: and the apostle tells us what that glo-

rious mystery is—"I speak concerning Christ and the church:" as much as to say, the mystery I speak of, is that blessed union that is between Christ and his church, which I spoke of before.

This is a blessed union indeed; of which that between a faithful minister and a Christian people is but a shadow. Ministers are not the proper husbands of the church, though their union to God's people, as Christ's ambassadors, in several respects resembles the conjugal relation: but Christ is the true husband of the church, to whom the souls of the saints are espoused indeed, and to whom they are united as his flesh and his bones, yea, and one spirit; to whom they have given themselves in an everlasting covenant, and whom alone they cleave to, love, honour, obey, and trust in, as their spiritual husband, whom alone they reserve themselves for as chaste virgins, and whom they follow whithersoever he goeth. There are many ministers in the church of Christ, and there may be several pastors of one particular church; but the church has but one husband, all others are rejected and despised in comparison of him; he is among the sons as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood; they all are barren and worthless, he only is the fruitful tree; and therefore, leaving all others, the church betakes herself to him alone, and sits under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet to her taste; she takes up her full and entire rest in him, desiring no other.—The relation between a minister and people shall be dissolved, and may be dissolved before death; but the union between Christ and his church shall never be dissolved, neither before death nor by death, but shall endure through all eternity; "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but Christ's conjugal love and kindness shall not depart from his church; neither shall the covenant of his peace, the marriage-covenant, be removed." Isa. liv. 1.—The union between a faithful minister and a Christian people is but a partial resemblance even of the marriage union; it is like marriage only in some particulars: but with respect to the union between Christ and his church, marriage is but a partial resemblance, yea, a faint shadow. Every thing desirable and excellent in the union between an earthly bridegroom and bride, is to be found in the union between Christ and his church; and that in an infinitely greater perfection and more glorious manner.—There is infinitely more to be found in it than ever was found between the happiest couple in a conjugal relation; or could be found if the bride and bridegroom had not only the innocence of Adam and Eve, but the perfection of angels.

Christ and his saints, standing in such a relation as this one to another, the saints must needs be unspeakably happy. Their mutual joy in each other is answerable to the nearness of their relation and strictness of their union. Christ rejoices over the

church as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, and she rejoices in him as the bride rejoices in the bridegroom. My text has respect to the mutual joy that Christ and his church should have in each other: for though the joy of Christ over his church only is mentioned, yet it is evident that this is here spoken of and promised as the great happiness of the church, and therefore supposes her joy in him.

The mutual joy of Christ and his church is like that of bridegroom and bride, in that they rejoice in each other, as those whom they have chosen above others, for their nearest, most intimate, and everlasting friends and companions. The church is Christ's chosen, Isa. xli. 9. "I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away?" chap. xlviii. 10. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." How often are God's saints called his elect or chosen ones? He has chosen them, not to be mere servants, but friends; John xv. 15. "I call you not servants;—but I have called you friends." And though Christ be the Lord of glory, infinitely above men and angels, yet he has chosen the elect to be his companions; and has taken upon him their nature; and so in some respect, as it were, levelled himself with them, that he might be their brother and companion. Christ, as well as David, calls the saints his brethren and companions, Psalm cxxii. 8. "For my brethren and companions' sake I will now say, Peace be within thee." So in the book of Canticles, he calls his church his sister and spouse. Christ hath loved and chosen his church as his peculiar friend, above others; Psalm cxxxv. 4. "The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure." As the bridegroom chooses the bride for his peculiar friend, above all others in the world; so Christ has chosen his church for a peculiar nearness to him, as his flesh and his bone, and the high honour and dignity of espousals above all others, rather than the fallen angels, yea, rather than the elect angels. For verily, in this respect, "he taketh not hold of angels, but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham;" as the words are in the original, Heb. ii. 16. He has chosen his church above the rest of mankind, above all the Heathen nations, and those that are without the visible church, and above all other professing Christians, Cant. vi. 9. "My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her." Thus Christ rejoices over his church, as having obtained in her that which he has chosen above all the rest of the creation, and as sweetly resting in his choice; Psalm cxxxii. 13, 14. "The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it.—This is my rest for ever."

On the other hand, the church chooses Christ above all others; he is in her eyes the chief among ten thousands, fairer than the sons of men: she rejects the suit of all his rivals, for his sake: her heart relinquishes the whole world; he is her pearl of

great price, for which she parts with all; and rejoices in him, as the choice and rest of her soul.

Christ and his church, like the bridegroom and bride, rejoice in each other, as having a special propriety in each other. All things are Christ's; but he has a special propriety in his church. There is nothing in heaven or earth, among all the creatures, that is his, in that high and excellent manner that the church is his: They are often called his portion and inheritance; they are said, Rev. xiv. 4, to be "the first-fruits to God and the Lamb." As of old, the first-fruit was that part of the harvest that belonged to God, and was to be offered to him; so the saints are the first fruits of God's creatures, being that part which is in a peculiar manner Christ's portion, above all the rest of the creation, James i. 18. "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." And Christ rejoices in his church, as in that which is peculiarly his, Isa. lxv. 19. "I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people." The church has also a peculiar propriety in Christ: though other things are hers, yet nothing is hers in that manner that her spiritual bridegroom is hers. Great and glorious as he is, yet he, with all his dignity and glory, is wholly given to her, to be fully possessed and enjoyed by her, to the utmost degree that she is capable of: therefore we have her so often saying in the language of exultation and triumph, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Cant. ii. 16. and vi. 3. and vii. 10.

Christ and his church, like the bridegroom and bride, rejoice in each other, as those that are the objects of each other's most tender and ardent love. The love of Christ to his church is altogether unparalleled: the height and depth and length and breadth of it pass knowledge: for he loved the church, and gave himself for it; and his love to her proved stronger than death. And on the other hand, she loves him with a supreme affection: nothing stands in competition with him in her heart; she loves him with all her heart. Her whole soul is offered up to him in the flame of love. And Christ rejoices, and has sweet rest and delight in his love to the church; Zeph. iii. 17. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy: he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." So the church, in the exercise of her love to Christ, rejoices with unspeakable joy; 1 Pet. i. 7, 8. "Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believe him, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Christ and his church rejoice in each other's beauty. The church rejoices in Christ's divine beauty and glory. She as it were, sweetly solaces herself in the light of the glory of the sun

of righteousness; and the saints say one to another, as in Isa. ii. 5, "O house of Jacob, come ye, let us walk in the light of the Lord." The perfections and virtues of Christ are as a perfumed ointment to the church, that make his very name to be to her as ointment poured forth; Cant. i. 3. "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee." And Christ delights and rejoices in the beauty of the church, the beauty which he hath put upon her: her Christian graces are ornaments of great price in his sight, 1 Pet. iii. 4. And he is spoken of as greatly desiring her beauty, Psalm xlv. 11. Yea, he himself speaks of his heart as ravished with her beauty, Cant. iv. 9. "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck."

Christ and his church, as the bridegroom and bride, rejoice in each other's love. Wine is spoken of, Psalm civ. 15, as that which maketh glad man's heart: but the church of Christ is spoken of as rejoicing in the love of Christ, as that which is more pleasant and refreshing than wine, Cant. i. 4. "The king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine." So on the other hand, Christ speaks of the church's love as far better to him than wine, Cant. iv. 10. "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse; how much better is thy love than wine!"

Christ and his church rejoice in communion with each other as in being united in their happiness, and having fellowship and a joint participation in each other's good: as the bridegroom and bride rejoice together at the wedding-feast, and as thenceforward they are joint partakers of each other's comforts and joys: Rev. iii. 20. "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." The church has fellowship with Christ in his own happiness, and his divine entertainments; his joy is fulfilled in her, John xv. 11. and xvii. 13. She sees light in his light; and she is made to drink at the river of his own pleasures, Psalm xxxvi. 8, 9. And Christ brings her to eat and drink at his own table, to take her fill of his own entertainments; Cant. v. 1. "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." And he, on the other hand, has fellowship with her; he feasts with her; her joys are his; and he rejoices in that entertainment that she provides for him. So Christ is said to feed among the lilies, Cant. ii. 16; and chap. vii. 13, she speaks of all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which she had laid up; and says to him, chap. iv. 16, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits;" and he makes answer in the next

verse, "I come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice, I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk."

And lastly, Christ and his church, as the bridegroom and bride, rejoice in conversing with each other. The words of Christ, by which he converses with his church, are most sweet to her; and, therefore, she says of him, Cant. v. 16, "His mouth is most sweet." And, on the other hand, he says of her, chapter ii. 14, "Let me hear thy voice: for sweet is thy voice." And chapter iv. 11, "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey-comb: honey and milk are under thy tongue."

Christ rejoices over his saints, as the bridegroom over the bride, at all times: but there are some seasons wherein he doth so more especially. Such a season is the time of the soul's conversion; when the good shepherd finds his lost sheep, then he brings it home rejoicing, and calls together his friends and neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me. The day of a sinner's conversion, is the day of Christ's espousals; and so is eminently the day of his rejoicing; Sol. Song, iii. 11. "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." And it is oftentimes remarkably the day of the saints' rejoicing in Christ: for then God turns again the captivity of his elect people, and, as it were, fills their mouth with laughter, and their tongue with singing; as in Psalm cxxvi. at the beginning. We read of the jailer, that when he was converted, "he rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house," Acts xvi. 34. There are other seasons of special communion of the saints with Christ, wherein Christ doth, in an especial manner, rejoice over his saints, and, as their bridegroom, brings them into his chambers, that they also, may be glad, and rejoice in him, Cant. i. 4.

But this mutual rejoicing of Christ, and his saints, will be in its perfection, at the time of the saints' glorification with Christ in heaven: for that is the proper time of the saints' entering in with the bridegroom into the marriage, Matt. xxv. 10. The saints' conversion is rather like the betrothing of the intended bride to her bridegroom before they come together; but at the time of the saints' glorification, that shall be fulfilled in Psalm xlv. 15. "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the king's palace." That is the time when those whom Christ loved, and for whom he gave himself—that he might sanctify and cleanse them, as with the washing of water by the word—shall be presented to him in glory, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Then the church shall be brought to the full enjoyment of her bridegroom, having all tears wiped away from her eyes; and

there shall be no more distance or absence. She shall then be brought to the entertainments of an eternal wedding-feast, and to dwell for ever with her bridegroom; yea, to dwell eternally in his embraces. Then Christ will give her his loves; and she shall drink her fill, yea, she shall swim in the ocean of his love.

And, as there are various seasons wherein Christ, and particular saints do more especially rejoice in each other; so there are, also, certain seasons wherein Christ doth more especially rejoice over his church, collectively taken. Such a season is a time of remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God: it is a time of the espousals of many souls to Christ; and so of the joy of espousals. It is a time wherein Christ is wont more especially to visit his saints with his loving-kindness, and to bring them near to himself, and especially to refresh their hearts with divine communications: on which account, it becomes a time of great joy to the church of Christ. So when the Spirit of God was so wonderfully poured out on the city of Samaria, with the preaching of Philip, we read that "there was great joy in that city," Acts viii. 8. And the time of that wonderful effusion of the Spirit at Jerusalem, begun at the feast of Pentecost, was a time of holy feasting and rejoicing, and a kind of wedding-day to the church of Christ; wherein "they continuing daily, with one accord, in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness, and singleness of heart," Acts ii. 46.

But more especially is the time of that great out-pouring of the Spirit of God in the latter days, so often foretold in the scriptures, represented as the marriage of the Lamb, and the rejoicing of Christ and his church in each other, as the bridegroom and the bride. This is the time prophesied of in our text and context; and foretold in Isa. lxv. 19. "I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, nor the voice of crying." This is the time spoken of Rev. xix. 6, 7, 8, 9; where the apostle John tells us, he "heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." And adds, "To her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb."

But above all, the time of Christ's last coming is that of the consummation of the church's marriage with the Lamb, and of the complete and most perfect joy of the wedding. In that

resurrection-morning, when the Sun of righteousness shall appear in our heavens, shining in all his brightness and glory, he will come forth as a bridegroom; he shall come in the glory of his Father, with all his holy angels. And at that glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, shall the whole elect church, complete as to every individual member, and each member with the whole man, both body and soul, and both in perfect glory, ascend up to meet the Lord in the air, to be thenceforth for ever with the Lord. That will be indeed a joyful meeting of this glorious bridegroom and bride. Then the bridegroom will appear in all his glory without any veil: and then the saints shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, and at the right hand of their Redeemer; and then the church will appear as the bride, the Lamb's wife. It is the state of the church after the resurrection, that is spoken of Rev. xxi. 2. "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." And verse 9. "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." Then will come the time, when Christ will sweetly invite his spouse to enter in with him into the palace of his glory, which he had been preparing for her from the foundation of the world, and shall, as it were, take her by the hand, and lead her in with him: and this glorious bridegroom and bride shall, with all their shining ornaments, ascend up together into the heaven of heavens; the whole multitude of glorious angels waiting upon them: and this son and daughter of God shall, in their united glory and joy, present themselves together before the Father; when Christ shall say, "Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me;" And they both shall in that relation and union, together receive the Father's blessing; and shall thenceforward rejoice together, in consummate, uninterrupted, immutable, and everlasting glory, in the love and embraces of each other, and joint enjoyment of the love of the Father.

2. That forementioned union of faithful ministers with the people of Christ, is in order to this blessedness.

(1.) It is only with reference to Christ as the true bridegroom of his church, that there is any union between a faithful minister and a Christian people, that is like that of a bridegroom and bride.

As I observed before, a faithful minister espouses a Christian people, not in his own name, but as Christ's ambassador; he espouses them, that therein they may be espoused to Christ. He loves her with a tender conjugal affection, as she is the spouse of Christ, and as he, as the minister of Christ, has his heart under the influence of the spirit of Christ; as Abraham's faithful servant, that was sent to fetch a wife for his master's son, was captivated with Rebekah's beauty and virtue; but not

with reference to an union with himself, but with his master Isaac. It was for his sake he loved her, and it was for him that he desired her. He set his heart upon her, that she might be Isaac's wife; and it was for this that he greatly rejoiced over her, for this he wooed her, and for this he obtained her, and she was for a season, in a sense united to him; but it was as a fellow-traveller, that by him she might be brought to Isaac in the land of Canaan. For this he adorned her with ornaments of gold; it was to prepare her for Isaac's embraces. All that tender care which a faithful minister takes of his people as a kind of spiritual husband—to provide for them, to lead, and feed, and comfort them—is not as to his own bride, but his master's.

And on the other hand, the people receive him, unite themselves to him in covenant, honour him, subject themselves to him, and obey him, only for Christ's sake, and as one that represents him, and acts in his name towards them. All this love, and honour, and submission, is ultimately referred to Christ. Thus the apostle says, Gal. iv. 14, "Ye received me as an angel, or messenger of God, even as Christ Jesus." And the children that are brought forth in consequence of the union of the pastor and people, are not properly the minister's children, but the children of Christ; they are not born of man, but of God.

(2.) The things that appertain to that forementioned union of a faithful minister and Christian people, are the principal appointed means of bringing the church to that blessedness that has been spoken of. Abraham's servant, and the part he acted as Isaac's agent towards Rebekah, were the principal means of his being brought to enjoy the benefits of her conjugal relation to Isaac. Ministers are sent to woo the souls of men for Christ, 2 Cor. v. 20. "We are then ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." We read in Matt. xxii. of a certain king, that made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to invite and bring in the guests: these servants are ministers. The labours of faithful ministers are the principal means God is wont to make use of for the conversion of the children of the church, and so of their espousals unto Christ. I have espoused you to one husband, says the apostle, 2 Cor. xi. 2. The preaching of the gospel by faithful ministers, is the principal means that God uses for exhibiting Christ, his love and benefits, to his elect people, and the chief means of their being sanctified, and so fitted to enjoy their spiritual bridegroom. Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, as by the washing of water by the word, (*i. e.* by the preaching of the gospel,) and so might present it to himself, a glorious church. The labours of faithful ministers are ordinarily the principal means of the joy of the saints in Christ Jesus, in their fellowship with their spiritual bridegroom

in this world; 2 Cor. i. 24. "We are helpers of your joy." They are God's instruments for bringing up the church, as it were, from her childhood, till she is fit for her marriage with the Lord of glory; as Mordecai brought up Hadassah, or Esther, whereby she was fitted to be queen in Ahasuerus's court. God purifies the church under their hand, as Esther (to fit her for her marriage with the king) was committed to the custody of Hegai, the keeper of the women, to be purified six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours. They are made the instruments of clothing the church in her wedding-garments, that fine linen, clean and white, and adorning her for her husband: as Abraham's servant adorned Rebekah with golden ear-rings and bracelets. Faithful ministers are made the instruments of leading the people of God in the way to heaven, conducting them to the glorious presence of the bridegroom, to the consummate joys of her marriage with the Lamb; as Abraham's servant conducted Rebekah from Padan-aram to Canaan, and presented her to Isaac, and delivered her into his embraces. For it is the office of ministers, not only to espouse the church to her husband, but to present her a chaste virgin to Christ.

I would now conclude this discourse with some exhortations, agreeable to what has been said. And,

1. The exhortation may be to all that are called to the work of the gospel ministry.—Let us who are honoured by the glorious bridegroom of the church, to be employed as his ministers, to so high a purpose as has been represented, be engaged and induced by what has been observed, to faithfulness in our great work; that we may be, and act towards Christ's people that are committed to our care, as those that are united to them in holy espousals, for Christ's sake, and in order to their being brought to the unspeakable blessedness of that more glorious union with the Lamb of God, in which he shall rejoice over them, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride. Let us see to it that our hearts are united to them, as a young man to a virgin that he marries, in the most ardent and tender affection; and that our regard to them be pure and uncorrupt, that it may be a regard to them, and not to what they have, or any worldly advantages we hope to gain of them. And let us behave ourselves as those that are devoted to their good: being willing to spend and be spent for them; joyfully undertaking and enduring the labour and self-denial that is requisite in order to a thorough fulfilling the ministry that we have received. Let us continually and earnestly endeavour to promote the prosperity and salvation of the souls committed to our care, looking on their calamities and their prosperity as our own; feeling their spiritual wounds and griefs, and refreshed with their consolations: and

spending our whole lives in diligent care and endeavour to provide for, nourish, and instruct our people, as the intended spouse of Christ, yet in her minority, that we may form her mind and behaviour, and bring her up for him, and that we may cleanse her, as with the washing of water by the word, and purify her as with sweet odours, and clothed in such raiment as may become Christ's bride. Let us aim that when the appointed wedding-day comes, we may have done our work as Christ's messengers; and may then be ready to present Christ's spouse to him, a chaste virgin, properly educated and formed, and suitably adorned for her marriage with the Lamb; that he may then present her to himself, a glorious church; not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, and may receive her into his eternal embraces, in perfect purity, beauty, and glory.

Here I would mention three or four things tending to excite us to this fidelity.

1. We ought to consider how much Christ has done to obtain that joy, wherein he rejoices over his church, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride.

The creation of the world seems to have been especially for this end, that the eternal Son of God might obtain a spouse towards whom he might fully exercise the infinite benevolence of his nature, and to whom he might, as it were, open and pour forth all that immense fountain of condescension, love, and grace, that was in his heart, and that in this way God might be glorified. Doubtless the work of creation is subordinate to the work of redemption: the creation of the new heavens and new earth, is represented as so much more excellent than the old, that, in comparison, it is not worthy to be mentioned, or come into mind.

Christ has done greater things than to create the world, in order to obtain his bride and and the joy of his espousals with her. For he became man for this end; which was a greater thing than his creating the world. For the creator to *make* the creature was a great thing; but for him to *become* a creature was a greater thing. And he did a much greater thing still to obtain this joy; in that for this he laid down his life, and suffered even the death of the cross; for this he poured out his soul unto death; and he that is the Lord of the universe, God over all, blessed for evermore, offered up himself a sacrifice, in both body and soul, in the flames of divine wrath. Christ obtains his elect spouse by conquest; for she was a captive in the hands of dreadful enemies; and her Redeemer came into the world to conquer these enemies, and rescue her out of their hands, that she might be his bride. And he came and encountered these enemies in the greatest battle that ever was beheld by men or angels: He fought with principalities and powers; he fought alone with the powers of darkness, and all the armies of hell;

yea, he conflicted with the infinitely more dreadful wrath of God, and overcame in this great battle; and thus he obtained his spouse. Let us consider at how great a price Christ purchased this spouse. He did not redeem her with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood; yea, he gave himself for her. When he offered up himself to God in those extreme labours and sufferings, this was the joy that was set before him, that made him cheerfully to endure the cross, and despise the pain and shame in comparison of this joy; even that rejoicing over his church, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride that the Father had promised him, and that he expected when he should present her to himself in perfect beauty and blessedness.

The prospect of this was what supported him in the midst of the dismal prospect of his sufferings, at which his soul was troubled; John xii. 27. "Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: But for this cause come I unto this hour." These words show the conflict and distress of Christ's holy soul in the view of his approaching sufferings. But in the midst of his trouble, he was refreshed with the joyful prospect of the success of those sufferings in bringing home his elect church to himself, signified by a voice from heaven, and promised by the Father: on which he says, in the language of triumph, ver. 31, 32, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

And ministers of the gospel are appointed to be the instruments of bringing this to pass; the instruments of bringing home his elect spouse to him, and her becoming his bride; and the instruments of her sanctifying and cleansing by the word, that she might be meet to be presented to him on the future glorious wedding-day. How great a motive then is here to induce us who are called to be these instruments, to be faithful in our work, and most willingly labour and suffer, that Christ may see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied? Shall Christ do such great things, and go through such great labours and sufferings to obtain this joy, and then honour us sinful worms, so as to employ us as his ministers and instruments to bring this joy to pass; and shall we be loth to labour, and backward to deny ourselves for this end?

2. Let us consider how much the manner in which Christ employs us in this great business has to engage us to a faithful performance of it. We are sent forth as his servants; but it is as highly dignified servants, as stewards of his household, as Abraham's servant; and as his ambassadors, to stand in his stead, and in his name, and represent his person in so great an affair as that of his espousals with the eternally beloved of his soul. Christ employs us not as mere servants, but as friends of the

bridegroom; agreeable to the style in which John the Baptist speaks of himself, John iii. 29; in which he probably alludes to an ancient custom among the Jews at their nuptial solemnities, at which one of the guests that was most honoured and next in dignity to the bridegroom, was styled *the friend of the bridegroom*.

There is not an angel in heaven, of how high an order soever, but what looks on himself as honoured by the son of God and Lord of glory, in being employed by him as his minister in the high affair of his espousals with his blessed bride. But such honour has Christ put upon us, that his spouse should in some sort be ours; that we should marry, as a young man marries a virgin, the same mystical person that he himself will rejoice over as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride: that we should be his ministers to treat and transact for him with his dear spouse, that he might obtain this joy: and in our treaty with her, to be married to her in his name, and sustain an image of his own endearing relation to her; and that she should receive us, in some sort, as himself, and her heart be united to us in esteem, honour, and affection, as those that represent him; and that Christ's and the church's children should be ours, and that the fruit of the travail of Christ's soul should be also the fruit of the travail of our souls; as the apostle speaks of himself as travailing in birth with his hearers, Gal. iv. 19. The reason why Christ puts such honour on faithful ministers, even above the angels themselves, is because they are of his beloved church, they are select members of his dear spouse, and Christ esteems nothing too much, no honour too great for her. Therefore Jesus Christ, the King of angels and men, does as it were cause it to be proclaimed concerning faithful ministers, as Ahasuerus did concerning him that brought up Esther, his beloved queen; "Thus shall it be done to the man that the king delights to honour."

And seeing Christ hath so honoured us, that our relation to his people resembles his, surely our affection to them should imitate his, in seeking their salvation, spiritual peace, and happiness. Our tender care, labours, self-denial, and readiness to suffer for their happiness, should imitate what hath appeared in him, who hath purchased them with his own blood.

3. Let it be considered, that if we faithfully acquit ourselves in our office, in the manner that hath been represented, we shall surely hereafter be partakers of the joy, when the bridegroom and bride shall rejoice in each other in perfect and eternal glory.

God once gave forth a particular command, with special solemnity, that it should be written for the notice of all professing Christians, through all ages, that they are happy and blessed indeed, who are called to the marriage-supper of the

Lamb; Rev. xix. 9. "And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." But if we are faithful in our work, we shall surely be the subjects of that blessedness; we shall be partakers of the joy of the bridegroom and bride, not merely as friends and neighbours, that are invited to be occasional guests, but as members of the one and the other. We shall be partakers with the church, the blessed bride, in her joy in the bridegroom, not only as friends and ministers to the church, but as members of principal dignity; as the eye, the ear, the hand, are principal members of the body. Faithful ministers in the church will hereafter be a part of the church that shall receive distinguished glory at the resurrection of the just, which, above all other times, may be looked on as the church's wedding-day; Dan. xii. 2, 3. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake, some to everlasting life. And they that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."—They are elders who are represented as that part of the church triumphant that sit next to the throne of God, Rev. iv. 4. "And round about the throne were four-and-twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four-and-twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold."

And we shall also be partakers of the joy of the bridegroom in his rejoicing over his bride. We, as the special friends of the bridegroom, shall stand by and hear him express his joy on that day, and rejoice greatly because of the bridegroom's voice; as John the Baptist said of himself, John iii. 29. "He that hath the bride, is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly, because of the bridegroom's voice." Christ, in reward for our faithful service, in winning and espousing his bride to him, and bringing her up from her minority, and adorning her for him, will then call us to partake with him in the joy of his marriage. And she that will then be his joy, shall also be our crown of rejoicing; 1 Thess. ii. 19. "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming?" What a joyful meeting had Christ and his disciples together, when the disciples returned to their Master, after the faithful and successful performance of their appointed service, when Christ sent them forth to preach the gospel; Luke x. 17. "And the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." Here we see how they rejoice; the next words show, how Christ also rejoiced on that occasion: "And he said unto them, I beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven." And, in the next verse but two, we are told, that "in

that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." So, if we faithfully acquit ourselves, we shall another day return to him with joy; and we shall rejoice with him, and he with us. Then will be the day when Christ, who hath sown in tears and in blood, and we who have reaped the fruits of his labours and sufferings, shall rejoice together, agreeable to John iv. 35, 37. And that will be a happy meeting, indeed, when Christ and his lovely and blessed bride, and faithful ministers, who have been the instruments of wooing and winning her heart to him, and adorning her for him, and presenting her to him, shall all rejoice together.

4. Further, to stir us up to faithfulness in the great business that is appointed us, in order to the mutual joy of this bridegroom and bride, let us consider what reason we have to hope that the time is approaching, when this joy shall be to a glorious degree fulfilled on earth, far beyond whatever yet has been; I mean the time of the church's latter-day glory. This is what the words of our text have a more direct respect to; and this is what is prophesied of in Hos. ii. 19, 20. "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." And this is what is especially intended by the marriage of the Lamb, in Rev. xix.

We are sure this day will come; and we have many reasons to think, that it is approaching; from the fulfilment of almost every thing that the prophecies speak of as preceding it, and their having been fulfilled now a long time; and from the general earnest expectations of the church of God, and the best of her ministers and members, and the late extraordinary things that have appeared in the church of God, and appertaining to the state of religion, and the present aspects of Divine Providence, which the time will not allow me largely to insist upon.

As the happiness of that day will have a great resemblance of the glory and joy of the eternal wedding-day of the church, after the resurrection of the just, so will the privileges of faithful ministers at that time much resemble those they shall enjoy with the bridegroom and bride, as to honour and happiness, in eternal glory. This is the time especially intended in the text, wherein it is said, "as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee." And it is after in the prophecies spoken of as a great part of the glory of that time, that then the church should be so well supplied with faithful ministers. So in the next verse to the text, "I have set watchmen on thy walls, O Jerusalem, that shall never hold their peace, day nor night."

So Isaiah xxx. 20, 21. "Thy teachers shall not be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers; and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Jer. iii. 15. "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." And chapter xxiii. 4. "And I will set up shepherds over them, which shall feed them." And the great privilege and joy of faithful ministers at that day is foretold in Isaiah lii. 8. "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion."

And as that day must needs be approaching, and we ourselves have lately seen some things which we have reason to hope are forerunners of it; certainly, it should strongly excite us to endeavour to be such pastors as God has promised to bless his church with at that time; that if any of us should live to see the dawning of that glorious day, we might share in the blessedness of it, and then be called, as the friends of the bridegroom, to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and partake of that joy in which heaven and earth, angels and saints, and Christ and his church, shall be united at that time.

But here I would apply the exhortation, in a few words, to that minister of Christ, who, above all others, is concerned in the solemnity of this day, who is now to be united to, and set over this people as their pastor.

You have now heard, reverend sir, the great importance and high ends of the office of an evangelical pastor, and the glorious privileges of such as are faithful in this office, imperfectly represented. May God grant that your union with this people this day, as their pastor, may be such, that God's people here may have the great promise God makes to his church in the text, now fulfilled unto them. May you now, as one of the precious sons of Zion, take this part of Christ's church by the hand, in the name of your great Master, the glorious bridegroom, with a heart devoted unto him with true adoration and supreme affection, and for his sake knit to this people, in a spiritual and pure love, and, as it were, a conjugal tenderness; ardently desiring that great happiness for them, which you have now heard Christ has chosen his church unto, and has shed his blood to obtain for her; being yourself ready to spend and be spent for them; remembering the great errand on which Christ sends you to them, *viz.* to woo and win their hearts, and espouse their souls to him, and to bring up his elect spouse, and to fit and adorn her for his embraces; that you may in due time present her a chaste virgin to him, for him to rejoice over, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride. How honourable is this business that Christ employs you in! and how joyfully

should you perform it! When Abraham's faithful servant was sent to take a wife for his master's son, how engaged was he in the business; and how joyful was he when he succeeded! With what joy did he bow his head and worship, and bless the Lord God of his master, for his mercy and his truth in making his way prosperous! And what a joyful meeting may we conclude he had with Isaac, when he met him in the field, by the well of Laha-roi, and there presented his beauteous Rebekah to him, and told him all things that he had done! But this was but a shadow of that joy that you shall have, if you imitate his fidelity, in the day when you shall meet your glorious master, and present Christ's church in this place, as a chaste and beautiful virgin unto him.

We trust, dear sir, that you will esteem it a most blessed employment, to spend your time and skill in adorning Christ's bride for her marriage with the Lamb, and that it is work which you will do with delight; and that you will take heed that the ornaments you put upon her, are of the right sort, what shall be indeed beautiful and precious in the eyes of the bridegroom, that she may be all-glorious within, and her clothing of wrought gold; that on the wedding-day, she may stand on the king's right hand in gold of Ophir.

The joyful day is coming, when the spouse of Christ shall be led to the king in raiment of needle-work; and angels and faithful ministers will be the servants that shall lead her in. And you, sir, if you are faithful in the charge now to be committed to you, shall be joined with glorious angels in that honourable and joyful service; but with this difference, that you shall have the higher privilege. Angels and faithful ministers shall be together in bringing in Christ's bride into his palace, and presenting her to him. But faithful ministers shall have a much higher participation of the joy of that occasion. They shall have a greater and more immediate participation with the bride in her joy; for they shall not only be ministers to the church as the angels are, but parts of the church, principal members of the bride. And as such, at the same time that angels do the part of ministering spirits to the bride, when they conduct her to the bridegroom, they shall also do the part of ministering spirits to faithful ministers. And they shall also have a higher participation with the bridegroom than the angels, in his rejoicing at that time; for they shall be nearer to him than they. They are also his members, and are honoured as the principal instruments of espousing the saints to him, and fitting them for his enjoyment; and therefore they will be more the crown of rejoicing to faithful ministers, than of the angels of heaven.

So great, dear sir, is the honour and joy that is set before you, to engage you to faithfulness in your pastoral care of this

people; so glorious the prize that Christ has set up to engage you to run the race that is set before you.

I would now conclude with a few words to the people of this congregation, whose souls are now to be committed to the care of that minister of Christ whom they have chosen as their pastor.

Let me take occasion, dear brethren, from what has been said to exhort you—not forgetting the respect, honour, and reverence, that will ever be due from you to your former pastor, who has served you so long in that work, but by reason of age and growing infirmities, and the prospect of his place being so happily supplied by a successor, has seen meet to relinquish the burden of the pastoral charge over you—to perform the duties that belong to you, in your part of that relation and union now to be established between you and your elect pastor. Receive him as the messenger of the Lord of Hosts, one that in his office represents the glorious bridegroom of the church; love and honour him, and willingly submit yourselves to him, as a virgin when married to a husband. Surely the feet of that messenger should be beautiful, that comes to you on such a blessed errand as that which you have heard, to espouse you to the eternal Son of God, and to fit you for, and lead you to him as your bridegroom. Your chosen pastor comes to you on this errand, and he comes in the name of the bridegroom, so empowered by him, and representing him, that in receiving him, you will receive Christ, and in rejecting him, you will reject Christ.

Be exhorted to treat your pastor as the beautiful and virtuous Rebekah treated Abraham's servant. She most charitably and hospitably entertained him, provided lodging and food for him and his company, and took care that he should be comfortably entertained and supplied in all respects, while he continued in his embassy; and that was the note or mark of distinction which God himself gave him, by which he should know the true spouse of Isaac from all others of the daughters of the city. Therefore in this respect approve yourselves as the true spouse of Christ, by giving kind entertainment to your minister that comes to espouse you to the antetype of Isaac. Provide for his outward subsistence and comfort, with the like cheerfulness that Rebekah did for Abraham's servant. You have an account of her alacrity and liberality in supplying him, in Gen. xxiv. 18, &c. Say as her brother did, ver. 31, "Come in thou blessed of the Lord."

Thus you should entertain your pastor. But this is not that wherein your duty towards him chiefly lies: the main thing is to comply with him in his great errand, and to yield to the suit that he makes to you in the name of Christ, to be his bride. In this you should be like Rebekah; she was, from what she heard of Isaac, and God's covenant with him, and blessing upon

him, from the mouth of Abraham's servant, willing for ever to forsake her own country, and her father's house, to go into a country she had never seen, to be Isaac's wife, whom also she never saw. After she had heard what the servant had to say, and her old friends had a mind she should put off the affair for the present—but it was insisted on that she should go immediately—and she was asked, "whether she would go with this man," she said, "I will go :" and she left her kindred, and followed the man through all that long journey, till he had brought her unto Isaac, and they three had that joyful meeting in Canaan. If you will this day receive your pastor in that union that is now to be established between him and you, it will be a joyful day in this place, and the joy will be like the joy of espousals, as when a young man marries a virgin ; and it will not only be a joyful day in East Hampton, but it will doubtless be a joyful day in heaven on your own account. And your joy will be a faint resemblance, and a forerunner of that future joy, when Christ shall rejoice over you as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, in heavenly glory.

And if your pastor be faithful in his office, and you hearken and yield to him in that great errand, on which Christ sends him to you, the time will come, wherein you and your pastor will be each others' crown of rejoicing, and wherein Christ and he and you shall all meet together at the glorious marriage of the Lamb, and shall rejoice in and over one another with perfect, uninterrupted, never ending, and never fading joy.

Note. SERMON XVIII. at the funeral of David Brainerd, is annexed to his life.

SERMON XIX.*

GOD'S AWFUL JUDGMENT IN THE BREAKING AND WITHERING OF THE STRONG RODS OF A COMMUNITY.

EZEK. XIX. 12.

Her strong Rods were broken and withered.

IN order to a right understanding and improvement of these words, these four things must be observed concerning them.

1. Who she is that is here represented as having had strong rods, *viz.* the Jewish community, who here, as often elsewhere, is called the people's mother. She is here compared to a vine planted in a very fruitful soil, verse 10. The Jewish church and state is often elsewhere compared to a vine; as Psalm lxxx. 8, &c. Isa. v. 2. Jer. ii. 21. Ezek. xv. and chap. xvii. 6.

2. What is meant by her strong rods, *viz.* her wise, able, and well qualified magistrates or rulers. That the rulers or magistrates are intended is manifest by verse 11. "And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule." And by rods that were strong, must be meant such rulers as were well qualified for magistracy, such as had great abilities and other qualifications fitting them for the business of rule. They were wont to choose a rod or staff of the strongest and hardest sort of wood that could be found, for the mace or sceptre of a prince; such an one only being counted fit for that use; and this generally was overlaid with gold.

It is very remarkable that such a strong rod should grow out of a weak vine: but so it had been in Israel, through God's extraordinary blessing, in times past. Though the nation is

* Preached at Northampton on the Lord's day, June 26, 1748, on the death of the Honourable John Stoddard, Esq. often a member of his Majesty's council, for many years chief justice of the court of Common Pleas for the county of Hampshire, judge of the probate of wills, and chief colonel of the regiment, &c. who died at Boston, June 19, 1748, in the 67th year of his age.

spoken of here, and frequently elsewhere, as weak and helpless in itself, and entirely dependent as a vine, the weakest of all trees, that cannot support itself by its own strength, and never stands but as it leans on or hangs by something else that is stronger than itself; yet God had caused many of her sons to be strong rods fit for sceptres; he had raised up in Israel many able and excellent princes and magistrates, who had done worthily in their day.

3. It should be understood and observed what is meant by these strong rods being broken and withered, *viz.* these able and excellent rulers being removed by death: men's dying is often compared in Scripture to the withering of the growth of the earth.

4. It should be observed after what manner the breaking and withering of these strong rods is here spoken of, *viz.* as a great and awful calamity, that God had brought upon that people; it is spoken of as one of the chief effects of God's dreadful displeasure against them: "But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken and withered, the fire hath consumed them." The great benefits she enjoyed while her strong rods remained, are represented in the preceding verse: "And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches; and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches." And the terrible calamities that attended the breaking and withering of her strong rods, are represented in the two verses next following the text: "And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground. And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit." And in the conclusion in the next words, is very emphatically declared the worthiness of such a dispensation to be greatly lamented: "So that she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule: this is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation."

That which I therefore observe from the words of the text, to be the subject of discourse at this time, is this, *viz.* When God by death removes from a people those in a place of public authority and rule that have been as strong rods, it is an awful judgment of God on that people, and worthy of great lamentation.

In discoursing on this proposition, I would,

1. Show what kind of rulers may fitly be called strong rods.

2. Show why the removal of such rulers from a people by death is to be looked upon as an awful judgment of God on that people, and is greatly to be lamented.

I. I would observe what qualifications of those who are in public authority and rule may properly give them the denomination of strong rods.

1. One qualification of rulers, whence they may properly be denominated strong rods, is great ability for the management of public affairs. This is the case when they who stand in a place of public authority, are men of great natural abilities, men of uncommon strength of reason, and largeness of understanding; especially when they have a remarkable genius for government, a peculiar turn of mind fitting them to gain an extraordinary understanding in things of that nature. They have ability, in an especial manner, for insight into the mysteries of government, and for discerning those things wherein the public welfare or calamity consists, and the proper means to avoid the one, and promote the other; an extraordinary talent at distinguishing what is right and just, from that which is wrong and unequal, and to see through the false colours with which injustice is often disguised, and unravel the false and subtle arguments, and cunning sophistry that is often made use of to defend iniquity. They have not only great natural abilities in these respects, but their abilities and talents have been improved by study, learning, observation, and experience; and by these means they have obtained great actual knowledge. They have acquired great skill in public affairs, and things requisite to be known, in order to their wise, prudent, and effectual management; they have obtained a great understanding of men and things, a great knowledge of human nature, and of the way of accommodating themselves to it, so as most effectually to influence it to wise purposes. They have obtained a very extensive knowledge of men with whom they are concerned in the management of public affairs, either those who have a joint concern in government, or those who are to be governed; and they have also obtained a very full and particular understanding of the state and circumstances of the country or people, of whom they have the care, and know well their laws and constitution, and what their circumstances require; and likewise have a great knowledge of the people of neighbouring nations, states, or provinces, with whom they have occasion to be concerned in the management of public affairs committed to them. These things all contribute to render those who are in authority fit to be denominated strong rods.

2. When they have not only great understanding, but largeness of heart, and a greatness and nobleness of disposition, this is another qualification that belongs to the character of a "strong rod."

Those that are by divine Providence set in a place of public authority and rule, are called "gods, and sons of the Most High," Psalm lxxxii. 6; and therefore it is peculiarly

unbecoming them to be of a mean spirit, a disposition that will admit of their doing those things that are sordid and vile; as when they are persons of a narrow, private spirit, that may be found in little tricks and intrigues to promote their private interest. Such will shamefully defile their hands to gain a few pounds, are not ashamed to grind the faces of the poor, and screw their neighbours; and will take advantage of their authority or commission to line their own pockets with what is fraudulently taken or withheld from others. When a man in authority is of such a mean spirit, it weakens his authority, and makes him justly contemptible in the eyes of men, and is utterly inconsistent with his being a strong rod.

But on the contrary, it greatly establishes his authority, and causes others to stand in awe of him, when they see him to be a man of greatness of mind, one that abhors those things that are mean and sordid; and not capable of a compliance with them; one that is of a public spirit, and not of a private, narrow disposition; a man of honour, and not of mean artifice, and clandestine management, for filthy lucre; one that abhors trifling and impertinence, or to waste away his time, that should be spent in the service of God, his king, and his country, in vain amusements and diversions, and in the pursuit of the gratifications of sensual appetites. God charges the rulers in Israel, that pretended to be their great and mighty men, with being mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink. There does not seem to be any reference to their being men of strong heads, and able to bear a great deal of strong drink, as some have supposed: there is a severe sarcasm in the words; for the prophet is speaking of the great men, princes, and judges, in Israel, (as appears by the verse next following,) which should be mighty men, strong rods, men of eminent qualifications, excelling in nobleness of spirit, of glorious strength, and fortitude of mind; but, instead of that, they were mighty or eminent for nothing but gluttony and drunkenness.

3. When those that are in authority are endowed with much of a spirit of government, this is another thing that entitles them to the denomination of "strong rods." They not only are men of great understanding, and wisdom, in affairs that appertain to government, but have also a peculiar talent at using their knowledge, and exerting themselves in this great and important business, according to their great understanding in it. They are men of eminent fortitude, and are not afraid of the faces of men, are not afraid to do the part that properly belongs to them as rulers, though they meet with great opposition, and the spirits of men are greatly irritated by it. They have a spirit of resolution and activity, so as to keep the wheels of government in proper motion, and to cause

judgment and justice to run down as a mighty stream. They have not only a great knowledge of government, and the things that belong to it in theory, but it is, as it were, natural to them to apply the various powers and faculties with which God has endowed them, and the knowledge they have obtained by study and observation, to that business, so as to perform it most advantageously and effectually.

4. Stability and firmness of integrity, fidelity, and piety, in the exercise of authority, is another thing that greatly contributes to, and is very essential in the character of a strong rod.

He is not only a man of strong reason and great discerning to know what is just, but is a man of strict integrity and righteousness, firm and immoveable in the execution of justice and judgment. He is not only a man of great ability to bear down vice and immorality, but has a disposition agreeable to such ability; is one that has a strong aversion to wickedness, and is disposed to use the power God has put into his hands to suppress it; and is one that not only opposes vice by his authority, but by his example. He is one of inflexible fidelity, who will be faithful to God, whose minister he is, to his people for good, and who is immoveable in his regard to his supreme authority, his commands, and his glory; and will be faithful to his king and country. He will not be induced by the many temptations that attend the business of men in public authority, basely to betray his trust; will not consent to do what he thinks not to be for the public good, for his own gain or advancement, or any private interest. He is well principled, and firm in acting agreeably to his principles, and will not be prevailed with to do otherwise through fear or favour, to follow a multitude, or to maintain his interest in any on whom he depends for the honour or profit of his place, whether it be prince or people; and is also one of that strength of mind, whereby he rules his own spirit. These things very eminently contribute to a ruler's title to the denomination of a "strong rod."

5. And *lastly*. It also contributes to that strength of a man in authority by which he may be denominated a "strong rod," when he is in such circumstances as give him advantage for the exercise of his strength for the public good; as his being a person of honourable descent, of a distinguished education, a man of estate, one advanced in years, one that has long been in authority, so that it is become as it were natural for the people to pay him deference, to reverence him, to be influenced and governed by him, and to submit to his authority; and add to this, his being extensively known, and much honoured and regarded abroad; his being one of a good presence, majesty of countenance, decency of behaviour, becoming one in authority; of forcible speech, &c. These things add to his strength, and

increase his ability and advantage to serve his generation in the place of a ruler, and therefore serve to render him one that is the more fitly and eminently called a "strong rod."—I now proceed,

II. To show that when such strong rods are broken and withered by death, it is an awful judgment of God on the people who are deprived of them, and worthy of great lamentation. —And that on two accounts.

1. By reason of the many positive benefits and blessings to a people that such rulers are the instruments of.

Almost all the prosperity of a public society and civil community does, under God, depend on their rulers. They are like the main springs or wheels in a machine, that keep every part in its due motion, and are in the body politic, as the vitals in the body natural, and as the pillars and foundation in a building. Civil rulers are called "the foundations of the earth." Psalm lxxxii. 5. and xi. 3.

The prosperity of a people depends more on their rulers than is commonly imagined. As they have the public society under their care and power, so they have advantage to promote the public interest every way; and if they are such rulers as have been described, they are some of the greatest blessings to the public. Their influence has a tendency to promote wealth, and cause temporal possessions and blessings to abound; and to promote virtue amongst them, and so to unite them one to another in peace and mutual benevolence, and make them happy in society, each one the instrument of his neighbour's quietness, comfort, and prosperity; and by these means to advance their reputation and honour in the world; and which is much more, to promote their spiritual and eternal happiness. Therefore, the wise man says, Eccles. x. 17, "Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles."

We have a remarkable instance and evidence of the happy and great influence of such a strong rod as has been described, to promote the universal prosperity of a people, in the history of the reign of Solomon, though many of the people were uneasy under his goverment, and thought him too rigorous in his administrations: see 1 Kings xii. 4. "Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon," 1 Kings iv. 25. "And he made silver to be among them as stones for abundance," chap. x. 27. "And Judah and Israel were many, eating and drinking and making merry." The queen of Sheba admired, and was greatly affected with the happiness of the people, under the government of such a strong rod, 1 Kings x. 8, 9. "Happy are thy men, (says she) happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee

and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighteth in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice."

The flourishing state of the kingdom of Judah, while they had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, is taken notice of in our context; "her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches."

Such rulers are eminently the ministers of God to his people for good; they are great gifts of the Most High to a people, blessed tokens of his favour, and vehicles of his goodness to them; and therein are images of his own Son, the grand medium of all God's goodness to fallen mankind; and, therefore, all of them are called sons of the Most High. All civil rulers, if they are as they ought to be, such strong rods as have been described, will be like the Son of the Most High, vehicles of good to mankind, and, like him, will be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain. And, therefore, when a people are bereaved of them, they sustain an unspeakable loss, and are the subjects of a judgment of God, that is greatly to be lamented.

2. On account of the great calamities such rulers are a defence from. Innumerable are the grievous and fatal calamities which public societies are exposed to in this evil world, from which they can have no defence without order and authority. If a people are without government, they are like a city broken down, and without walls, encompassed on every side by enemies, and become unavoidably subject to all manner of confusion and misery.

Government is necessary to defend communities from miseries from within themselves; from the prevalence of intestine discord, mutual injustice, and violence; the members of the society continually making a prey one of another, without any defence from each other. Rulers are the heads of union in public societies, that hold the parts together; without which, nothing else is to be expected than that the members of the society will be continually divided against themselves, every one acting the part of an enemy to his neighbour, every one's hand against every man, and every man's hand against him; going on in remediless and endless broils and jarring, until the society be utterly dissolved and broken in pieces, and life itself, in the neighbourhood of our fellow-creatures, becomes miserable and intolerable.

We may see the need of government in societies by what is visible in families, those lesser societies, of which all public societies are constituted. How miserable would these little

societies be, if all were left to themselves, without any authority or superiority in one above another, or any head of union and influence among them? We may be convinced by what we see of the lamentable consequences of the want of a proper exercise of authority and maintenance of government in families, which yet are not absolutely without all authority. No less need is there of government in public societies, but much more as they are larger; a very few may possibly, without any government, act by concert, so as to concur in what shall be for the welfare of the whole; but this is not to be expected among a multitude, constituted of many thousands, of a great variety of tempers, and different interests.

As government is absolutely necessary, so there is a necessity of strong rods in order to it: the business being such as requires persons so qualified: no other being sufficient for, or well capable of the government of public societies: and, therefore, those public societies are miserable that have not such strong rods for sceptres to rule, Eccles. x. 16. "Wo to thee, O land, when thy king is a child."

As government, and strong rods for the exercise of it, are necessary to preserve public societies from dreadful and fatal calamities arising from among themselves, so no less requisite are they to defend the community from foreign enemies. As they are like the pillars of a building, so they are also like the walls and bulwarks of a city: they are, under God, the main strength of a people in the time of war, and the chief instruments of their preservation, safety, and rest. This is signified in a very lively manner in the words that are used by the Jewish community in her lamentations, to express the expectations she had from her princes, Lam. iv. 20. "The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, under his shadow we shall live among the heathen." In this respect, also, such strong rods are sons of the Most High, and images, or resemblances of the Son of God, *viz.* as they are their saviours from their enemies; as the judges that God raised up of old in Israel are called, Neh. ix. 27. "Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them; and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and, according to thy manifold mercies, thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies."

Thus both the prosperity and safety of a people under God, depend on such rulers as are *strong rods*. While they enjoy such blessings, they are wont to be like a vine planted in a fruitful soil, with her stature exalted among the thick branches, appearing in her height with the multitude of her branches; but when they have no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule, they are like a vine planted in a wilderness that is exposed to be plucked

up, and cast down to the ground, to have her fruit dried up with the east wind, and to have fire coming out of her own branches to devour her fruit.

On these accounts, when a people's strong rods are broken and withered, it is an awful judgment of God on that people, and worthy of great lamentation: as when King Josiah (who was doubtless one of the great rods referred to in the text) was dead, the people made great lamentation for him, 2 Chron. xxxv. 24, 25. "And they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers: and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, and all the singing-men and the singing-women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel, and behold, they are written in the Lamentations."

APPLICATION.

I come now to apply these things to our own case, under the late awful frown of divine Providence upon us, in removing by death that honourable person in public rule and authority, an inhabitant of this town, and belonging to this congregation and church, who died at Boston the last Lord's day.

He was eminently a strong rod in the fore-mentioned respects. As to his natural abilities, strength of reason, greatness and clearness of discerning, and depth of penetration, he was one of the first rank. It may be doubted whether he has left his superior in these respects in these parts of the world. He was a man of a truly great genius, and his genius was peculiarly fitted for the understanding and managing of public affairs.

And as his natural capacity was great, so was the knowledge that he had acquired; his understanding being greatly improved by close application of mind to those things he was called to be concerned in, and by a very exact observation of them, and long experience in them. He had indeed a great insight into the nature of public societies, the mysteries of government, and the affairs of peace and war. He had a discernment that very few have of those things wherein the public weal consists, and what those things are that expose public societies; and of the proper means to avoid the latter, and promote the former. He was quick in his discerning, in that in most cases, especially such as belonged to his proper business, he at first sight would see farther than most men when they had done their best; but yet he had a wonderful faculty of improving his own thoughts by meditation, and carrying his views a greater and greater length by long and close application of mind. He had

an extraordinary ability to distinguish right and wrong, in the midst of intricacies and circumstances that tended to perplex and darken the case. He was able to weigh things as it were in a balance, and to distinguish those things that were solid and weighty from those that had only a fair show without substance; which he evidently discovered in his accurate, clear, and plain way of stating and committing causes to a jury, from the bench, as by others have been observed. He wonderfully distinguished truth from falsehood, and the most laboured cases seemed always to lie clear in his mind, his ideas being properly ranged; and he had a talent of communicating them to every one's understanding, beyond almost any one; and if any were misguided, it was not because truth and falsehood, right and wrong, were not well distinguished.

He was probably one of the ablest politicians that ever New England bred. He had a very uncommon insight into human nature, and a marvellous ability to penetrate into the particular tempers and dispositions of such as he had to deal with, and to discern the fittest way of treating them, so as most effectually to influence them to any good and wise purpose.

And never perhaps was there a person that had a more extensive and thorough knowledge of the state of this land, and its public affairs, and of persons that were jointly concerned with him in them. He knew this people, and their circumstances, and what their circumstances required. He discerned the diseases of this body, and what were the proper remedies, as an able and masterly physician. He had a great acquaintance with the neighbouring colonies, and also the nations on this continent, with whom we are concerned in our public affairs. He had a far greater knowledge than any other person in the land, of the several nations of Indians in these northern parts of America, their tempers, manners, and the proper way of treating them; and was more extensively known by them than any other person in the country. And no other person in authority in this province had such an acquaintance with the people and country of Canada, the land of our enemies, as he had.

He was exceeding far from a disposition to forwardness to intermeddle with other people's business; but as to what belonged to his proper business, in the offices he sustained, and the important affairs of which he had the care, he had a great understanding of what belonged to them. I have often been surprised at the length of his reach, and what I have seen of his ability to foresee and determine the consequences of things, even at a great distance, and quite beyond the sight of other men. He was not wavering and unsteady in his opinion. His manner was never to pass a judgment rashly, but was wont first thoroughly to deliberate and weigh an affair; and in this, not-

withstanding his great abilities, he was glad to improve by the help of conversation and discourse with others, (and often spake of the great advantage he found by it;) but when, on mature consideration, he had settled his judgment, he was not easily turned from it by false colours, and plausible pretences and appearances.

And besides his knowledge of things belonging to his particular calling as a ruler, he had also a great degree of understanding in things belonging to his general calling as a Christian. He was no inconsiderable divine. He was a wise casuist, as I know by the great help I have found from time to time by his judgment and advice in cases of conscienee, wherein I have consulted him. And indeed I scarce knew the divine that I ever found more able to help and enlighten the mind in such cases than he. And he had no small degree of knowledge in things pertaining to experimental religion; but was wont to discourse on such subjects, not only with accurate doctrinal distinctions, but as one intimately and feelingly acquainted with these things.

He was not only great in speculative knowledge, but his knowledge was practical; such as tended to a wise conduct in the affairs, business, and duties of life; so as properly to have the denomination of wisdom, and so as properly and eminently to invest him with the character of a wise man. And he was not only eminently wise and prudent in his own conduct, but was one of the ablest and wisest counsellors of others in any difficult affair.

The greatness and honourableness of his disposition was answerable to the largeness of his understanding. He was naturally of a great mind; in this respect he was truly the son of nobles. He greatly abhorred things which were mean and sordid, and seemed to be incapable of a compliance with them. How far was he from trifling and impertinence in his conversation? How far from a busy, meddling disposition? How far from any sly and clandestine management to fill his pockets with what was fraudulently withheld, or violently squeezed from the labourer, soldier, or inferior officer? How far from taking advantage from his commission or authority, or any superior power he had in his hands; or the ignorance, dependence, or necessities of others, to add to his own gains with what properly belonged to them, and with what they might justly expect as a proper reward for any of their services? How far was he from secretly taking bribes offered to induce him to favour any man in his cause, or by his power or interest to promote his being advanced to any place of public trust, honour, or profit? How greatly did he abhor lying and prevarication? And how immoveably steadfast was he to exact truth? His hatred of those things that were mean and sordid was so apparent, and well

known, that it was evident that men dreaded to appear in any thing of that nature in his presence.

He was a man of a remarkably public spirit, a true lover of his country, and who greatly abhorred sacrificing the public welfare to private interest. He was very eminently endowed with a spirit of government. The God of nature seemed to have formed him for government, as though he had been made on purpose, and cast into a mould, by which he should be every way fitted for the business of a man in public authority. Such a behaviour and conduct was natural to him, as tended to maintain his authority, and possess others with awe and reverence, and to enforce and render effectual what he said and did in the exercise of his authority. He did not bear the sword in vain. He was truly a terror to evil-doers. What I saw in him often put me in mind of that saying of the wise man, Prov. xx. 8. "The king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes." He was one that was not afraid of the faces of men: and every one knew that it was in vain to attempt to deter him from doing what, on mature consideration, he had determined he ought to do.—Every thing in him was great, and becoming a man in his public station. Perhaps never was there a man that appeared in New England, to whom the denomination of *a great man* did more properly belong.

But though he was one that was great among men, exalted above others in abilities and greatness of mind, and in the place of rule, and feared not the faces of men, yet he feared God. He was strictly conscientious in his conduct, both in public and private. I never knew the man that seemed more steadfastly and immoveably to act by principle, and according to rules and maxims, established and settled in his mind by the dictates of his judgment and conscience. He was a man of strict justice and fidelity. Faithfulness was eminently his character. Some of his greatest opponents that have been of the contrary party to him in public affairs, yet have openly acknowledged this of him, That he was a faithful man. He was remarkably faithful in his public trusts. He would not basely betray his trust, from fear or favour. It was in vain to expect it; however men might oppose him or neglect him, and how great soever they were. Nor would he neglect the public interest committed to him, for the sake of his own ease, but diligently and laboriously watched and laboured for it night and day. And he was faithful in private affairs as well as public. He was a most faithful friend; faithful to any one that in any case asked his counsel; and his fidelity might be depended upon in whatever affair he undertook for any of his neighbours.

He was a noted instance of the virtue of temperance, unalterable in it, in all places, in all companies, and in the midst of all temptations. Though he was a man of a great spirit, yet he

had a remarkable government of his spirit; and excelled in the government of his tongue. In the midst of all provocations from multitudes he had to deal with, and the great multiplicity of perplexing affairs in which he was concerned, and all the opposition and reproaches of which he was at any time the subject; yet what was there that ever proceeded out of his mouth that his enemies could lay hold of? No profane language, no vain, rash, unseemly, and unchristian speeches. If at any time he expressed himself with great warmth and vigour, it seemed to be from principle and determination of judgment, rather than from passion. When he expressed himself strongly, and with vehemence, those that were acquainted with him, and well observed him from time to time, might evidently see it was done in consequence of thought and judgment, weighing the circumstances and consequences of things.

The calmness and steadiness of his behaviour in private, particularly in his family, appeared remarkable and exemplary to those who had most opportunity to observe. He was thoroughly established in those religious principles and doctrines of the first fathers of New England, usually called the *doctrines of grace*, and had a great detestation of the opposite errors of the present fashionable divinity, as very contrary to the word of God, and the experience of every true Christian. And as he was a friend to truth, so he was a friend to vital piety and the power of godliness, and ever countenanced and favoured it on all occasions.

He abhorred profaneness, and was a person of a serious and decent spirit, and ever treated sacred things with reverence. He was exemplary for his decent attendance on the public worship of God. Who ever saw him irreverently and indecently lolling, and laying down his head to sleep, or gazing about the meeting-house in time of divine service? And as he was able (as was before observed) to discourse very understandingly of experimental religion, so to some persons with whom he was very intimate, he gave intimations sufficiently plain, while conversing of these things, that they were matters of his own experience. And some serious persons in civil authority, who have ordinarily differed from him in matters of government, yet on some occasional close conversation with him on things of religion, have manifested a high opinion of him as to real experimental piety.

As he was known to be a serious person, and an enemy to a profane or vain conversation, so he was feared on that account by great and small. When he was in the room, only his presence was sufficient to maintain decency; though many were there accounted great men, who otherwise were disposed to take a much greater freedom in their talk and behaviour, than they dared to do in his presence. He was not unmindful of

death, nor unmindful of his own frailty, nor did death come unexpected to him. For some years past, he has spoken much to some persons of dying, and going into the eternal world, signifying that he did not expect to continue long here.

Added to all these things, to render him eminently a *strong rod*, he was attended with many circumstances which tended to give him advantage for the exerting of his strength for the public good. He was honourably descended, was a man of considerable substance, had been long in authority, was extensively known and honoured abroad, was high in the esteem of the many tribes of Indians in the neighbourhood of the British colonies, and so had great influence upon them, above any other man in New England. God had endowed him with a comely presence, and majesty of countenance, becoming the great qualities of his mind, and the place in which God had set him.

In the exercise of these qualities and endowments, under these advantages, he has been, as it were, a father to this part of the land, on whom the whole country had, under God, its dependence in all its public affairs, and especially since the beginning of the present war. How much the weight of all the warlike concerns of the country (which above any part of the land lies exposed to the enemy) has lain on his shoulders, and how he has been the spring of all motion, and the doer of every thing that has been done, and how wisely and faithfully he has conducted these affairs, I need not inform this congregation. You well know that he took care of the county as a father of a family of children, not neglecting men's lives, and making light of their blood; but with great diligence, vigilance, and prudence, applying himself continually to the proper means of our safety and welfare. And especially has this his native town, where he has dwelt from his infancy, reaped the benefit of his happy influence. His wisdom has been, under God, very much our guide, and his authority our support and strength, and he has been a great honour to Northampton, and ornament to our church. He continued in full capacity of usefulness while he lived; he was indeed considerably advanced in years, but his powers of mind were not sensibly abated, and his strength of body was not so impaired, but that he was able to go long journeys, in extreme heat and cold, and in a short time.

But now this "strong rod is broken and withered," and surely the judgment of God therein is very awful, and the dispensation that which may well be for a lamentation. Probably we shall be more sensible of the worth and importance of such a strong rod by the want of it. The awful voice of God in this providence is worthy to be attended to by this whole province, and especially by the people of this county, but in a more peculiar manner by us of this town. We have now this testimony of the divine displeasure, added to all the other dark clouds God

has lately brought over us, and his awful frowns upon us. It is a dispensation, on many accounts, greatly calling for our humiliation and fear before God; an awful manifestation of his supreme, universal, and absolute dominion, calling us to adore the divine sovereignty, and tremble at the presence of this great God. And it is a lively instance of human frailty und mortality. We see how that none are out of the reach of death, that no greatness, no authority, no wisdom and sagacity, no honourableness of person or station no degree of valuableness and importance, exempts from the stroke of death. This is therefore a loud and solemn warning to all sorts to prepare for their departure hence.

And the memory of this person who is now gone, who was made so great a blessing while he lived, should engage us to show respect and kindness to his family. This we should do both out of respect to him and to his father, your former eminent pastor, who in his day was in a remarkable manner a father to this part of the land in spirituals, and especially to this town, as this his son has been in temporals.—God greatly resented it, when the children of Israel did not show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal that had been made an instrument of so much good to them, Judges viii. 35. "Neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, according to all the good which he had showed unto Israel."

SERMON XX.*

TRUE GRACE DISTINGUISHED FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF DEVILS.

JAMES ii. 19.

Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

OBSERVE in these words,—1. Something that some depended on, as an evidence of their good estate and acceptance, as the objects of God's favour, *viz.* a speculative faith, or belief of the doctrines of religion. The great doctrine of the existence of one only God is particularly mentioned; probably, because this was a doctrine wherein, especially, there was a visible and noted distinction between professing Christians and the heathens, amongst whom the Christians in those days were dispersed. And therefore, this was what many trusted in, as what recommended them to, or at least was an evidence of their interest in the great spiritual and eternal privileges, in which real Christians were distinguished from the rest of the world.

2. How much is allowed concerning this faith, *viz.* That it is a good attainment; "Thou dost well." It was good, as it was necessary. This doctrine was one of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; and, in some respects, above all others fundamental. It was necessary to be believed, in order to salvation. To be without the belief of this doctrine, especially in those that had such advantage to know as they had to whom the apostle wrote, would be a great sin, and what would vastly aggravate their damnation. This belief was also good, as it had a good tendency in many respects.

* Preached before the Synod of New York, convened at Newark, in New Jersey, on September 28, N. S. 1752.

3. What is implicitly denied concerning it, *viz.* That it is any evidence of a person's being in a state of salvation. The whole context shows this to be the design of the apostle in the words. And it is particularly manifest, by the conclusion of the verse; which is,

4. The thing observable in the words, *viz.* The argument by which the apostle proves, that this is no sign of a state of grace, *viz.* that it is found in the devils. They believe that there is one God, and that he is a holy, sin-hating God; and that he is a God of truth, and will fulfil his threatenings, by which he has denounced future judgments, and a great increase of misery on them; and that he is an almighty God, and able to execute his threatened vengeance upon them.

Therefore, the doctrine I infer from the words to make the subject of my present discourse, is this, *viz.* Nothing in the mind of man, that is of the same nature with what the devils experience, or are the subjects of, is any sure sign of saving grace.

If there be any thing that the devils have, or find in themselves, which is an evidence of the saving grace of the Spirit of God, then the apostle's argument is not good: which is plainly this: "That which is in the devils, or which they do, is no certain evidence of grace. But the devils believe that there is one God. Therefore, thy believing that there is one God, is no sure evidence that thou art gracious." So that the whole foundation of the apostle's argument lies in that proposition:—"That which is in the devils, is no certain sign of grace."—Nevertheless, I shall mention two or three farther reasons, or arguments of the truth of this doctrine.

1. The devils have no degree of holiness: and, therefore, those things which are nothing beyond what they are the subjects of, cannot be holy experiences.

The devil once was holy; but when he fell, he lost all his holiness, and became perfectly wicked. He is the greatest sinner, and, in some sense, the father of all sin. John viii. 44. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there was no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." 1 John iii. 8. "He that committeth sin, is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." He is often spoken of, by way of eminence, as "the wicked one." So, Matt. xiii. 19. "Then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." Verse 38. "The tares are the children of the wicked one." 1 John ii. 13. "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome

the wicked one." Chap. iii. 12. "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one." Chap. v. 18. "Whosoever is born of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." So the devils are called evil spirits, unclean spirits, powers of darkness, rulers of the darkness of this world, and wickedness itself. Eph. vi. 12. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Therefore, surely, those things which the minds of devils are the subjects of, can have nothing of the nature of true holiness in them. The knowledge and understanding which they have of the things of God and religion, cannot be of the nature of divine and holy light, nor any knowledge that is merely of the same kind. No impressions made on their hearts, can be of a spiritual nature. That kind of sense which they have of divine things, however great, cannot be a holy sense. Such affections as move their hearts, however powerful, cannot be holy affections. If there be no holiness in them, as they are in the devil, there can be no holiness in them as they are in man; unless something be added to them, beyond what is in the devil. And if any thing be added to them, then they are not the same things; but are something beyond what devils are the subjects of; which is contrary to the supposition; for the proposition which I am upon is, that those things which are of the same nature, and nothing beyond what devils are the subjects of, cannot be holy experiences. It is not the subject that makes the affection, or experience, or quality holy; but it is the quality that makes the subject holy.

And if those qualities and experiences which the devils are the subjects of, have nothing of the nature of holiness in them, then they can be no certain signs, that persons which have them are holy or gracious. There is no certain sign of true grace, but those things which are spiritual and gracious. It is God's image that is his seal and mark, the stamp by which those that are his, are known. But that which has nothing of the nature of holiness, has nothing of this image. That which is a sure sign of grace, must either be something which has the nature and essence of grace, or flows from, or some way belongs to its essence: For that which distinguishes things one from another, is the essence, or something appertaining to their essence. And, therefore, that which is sometimes found wholly without the essence of holiness, or grace, can be no essential, sure, or distinguishing mark of grace.

II. The devils are not only absolutely without all true holiness, but they are not so much as the subjects of any common grace.

If any should imagine, that some things may be signs of grace which are not grace itself, or which have nothing of the nature and essence of grace and holiness in them; yet, certainly they will allow, that the qualifications which are sure evidences of grace, must be things that are near akin to grace, or having some remarkably affinity with it. But the devils are not only wholly destitute of any true holiness, but they are at the greatest distance from it, and have nothing in them in any wise akin to it.

There are many in this world who are wholly destitute of saving grace, who yet have common grace. They have no true holiness, but nevertheless have something of that which is called moral virtue; and are the subjects of some degree of the common influences of the Spirit of God. It is so with those in general that live under the light of the gospel and are not given up to judicial blindness and hardness. Yea, those that are thus given up, yet have some degree of restraining grace while they live in this world; without which the earth could not bear them, and they would in no measure be tolerable members of human society. But when any are damned, or cast into hell, as the devils are, God wholly withdraws his restraining grace, and all merciful influences of his Spirit whatsoever. They have neither saving grace nor common grace; neither the *grace* of the Spirit, nor any of the common *gifts* of the Spirit; neither true holiness, nor moral virtue of any kind. Hence arises the vast increase of the exercise of wickedness in the hearts of men when they are damned. And herein is the chief difference between the damned in hell, and unregenerate and graceless men in this world. Not that wicked men in this world have any more holiness or true virtue than the damned, or have wicked men, when they leave this world any principles of wickedness, infused into them: but when men are cast into hell, God perfectly takes away his Spirit from them, as to all its merciful common influences, and entirely withdraws from them all restraints of his Spirit and good providence.

III. It is unreasonable to suppose, that a person's being in any respect as the devil is, should be a certain sign that he is very unlike and opposite to him, and hereafter shall not have his part with him. True saints are extremely unlike and contrary to the devil, both relatively and really. They are so *relatively*. The devil is the grand rebel; the chief enemy of God and Christ; the object of God's greatest wrath; a condemned malefactor, utterly rejected and cast off by him; for ever shut out of his presence; the prisoner of his justice; an everlasting inhabitant of the infernal world. The saints, on the contrary, are the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem; members of the family of the glorious King of heaven; the children of God; the brethren and spouse of his dear Son; heirs of God; joint heirs with Christ; kings and priests unto God. And they are ex-

tremely different *really*. The devil, on account of his hateful nature, and those accursed dispositions which reign in him, is called Satan, the adversary, Abaddon and Apollyon, the great destroyer, the wolf, the roaring lion, the great dragon, the old serpent. The saints are represented as God's holy ones, his anointed ones, the excellent of the earth; the meek of the earth; lambs and doves; Christ's little children; having the image of God, pure in heart; God's jewels; lilies in Christ's garden; plants of paradise; stars of heaven; temples of the living God. The saints, so far as they are saints, are as diverse from the devil, as heaven is from hell; and much more contrary than light is to darkness: and the eternal state that they are appointed to, is answerably diverse and contrary.

Now, it is not reasonable to suppose, that being in any respect as Satan is, or being the subject of any of the same properties, qualifications, affections, or actions, that are in him, is any certain evidence that persons are thus exceeding different from him, and in circumstances so diverse, and appointed to an eternal state so extremely contrary in all respects. Wicked men are in scripture called the children of the devil. Now is it reasonable to suppose, that men's being in any respect as the devil is, can be a certain sign that they are not his children, but the children of the infinitely holy and blessed God? We are informed, that wicked men shall hereafter have their part with devils; shall be sentenced to the same everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels. Now, can a man's being like the devil in any respect be a sure token that he shall not have his part with him, but with glorious angels, and with Jesus Christ, dwelling with him, where he is, that he may behold and partake of his glory?

IMPROVEMENT.

The *first* use may lie in several inferences, for our *instruction*.

I. From what has been said, it may be inferred, by parity of reason, that nothing that damned men *do*, or ever will *experience*, can be any sure sign of grace.

Damned men are like the devils, are conformed to them in nature and state. They have nothing better in them than the devils, have no higher principles in their hearts; experience nothing, and do nothing of a more excellent kind; as they are the children and servants of the devil; and as such, shall dwell with him, and be partakers with him of the same misery. As Christ says, concerning the saints in their future state, Matt. xxii. 13. "That they shall be as the angels of God in heaven:" so it may be said concerning ungodly men in their future state, that they shall be as the fallen, wicked angels in hell.

Each of the forementioned reasons, given to show the truth of the doctrine with respect to devils, holds good with respect to damned men. Damned men have no degree of holiness; and therefore those things which are nothing beyond what they have, cannot be holy experiences. Damned men are not only absolutely destitute of all true holiness, but they have not so much as any common grace. And lastly, it is unreasonable to suppose, that a person's being in any respect as the damned in hell are, should be a certain sign that they are very unlike and opposite to them, and hereafter shall not have their portion with them.

II. We may hence infer, that no degree of *speculative knowledge* of things of religion is any certain sign of saving grace. The devil, before his fall, was among those bright and glorious angels of heaven, which are represented as morning-stars, and flames of fire, that excel in strength and wisdom. And though he be now become sinful, yet his sin has not abolished the faculties of the angelic nature; as when man fell, he did not lose the faculties of the human nature.—Sin destroys spiritual principles, but not the natural faculties. It is true, sin, when in full dominion, entirely prevents the exercise of the natural faculties in holy and spiritual understanding; and lays many impediments in the way of their proper exercises in other respects. It lays the natural faculty of reason under great disadvantages, by many and strong prejudices; and in fallen men, the faculties of the soul are, doubtless, greatly impeded in their exercise, through that great weakness and disorder of the corporeal organ to which it is strictly united, and which is the consequence of sin.—But there seems to be nothing in the nature of sin, or moral corruption, that has any tendency to destroy the natural capacity, or even to diminish it, properly speaking. If sin were of such a nature as necessarily to have that tendency and effect; then it might be expected, that wicked men, in a future state, where they are given up entirely to the unrestrained exercise of their corruptions and lusts, and sin is in all respects brought to its greatest perfection in them, would have the capacity of their souls greatly diminished. This we have no reason to suppose; but rather, on the contrary, that their capacities are greatly enlarged, and that their actual knowledge is vastly increased; and that even with respect to the Divine Being, and the things of religion, and the great concerns of the immortal souls of men, the eyes of wicked men are opened, when they go into another world.

The greatness of the abilities of devils may be argued, from the representation in Eph. vi. 12. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers," &c. The same may also be argued from what the scripture says of Satan's subtilty. Gen. iii. 1. 2 Cor. xi. 3. Acts xiii. 10. And

as the devil has a faculty of understanding of large capacity, so he is capable of a great speculative knowledge of the things of God, and the invisible and eternal world, as well as other things; and must needs actually have a great understanding of these things; as these have always been chiefly in his view; and as his circumstances, from his first existence, have been such as have tended chiefly to engage him to attend to these things. Before his fall, he was one of those angels who continually behold the face of the Father in heaven; and sin has no tendency to destroy the memory, and therefore has no tendency to blot out of it any speculative knowledge that was formerly there.

As the devil's subtilty shows his great capacity; so the way in which his subtilty is exercised and manifested—which is principally in his artful management with respect to things of religion, his exceeding subtle representations, insinuations, reasonings, and temptations, concerning these things—demonstrates his great actual understanding of them; as, in order to be a very artful disputant in any science, though it be only to confound and deceive such as are conversant in it, a person had need to have a great and extensive acquaintance with the things which pertain to that science.

Thus the devil has undoubtedly a great degree of speculative knowledge in divinity; having been, as it were, educated in the best divinity school in the universe, *viz.* the heaven of heavens. He must needs have such an extensive and accurate knowledge concerning the nature and attributes of God, as we, worms of the dust, in our present state, are not capable of. And he must have a far more extensive knowledge of the works of God, as of the work of creation in particular; for he was a spectator of the creation of this visible world; he was one of those morning-stars (Job xxxviii. 4—7.) "who sang together, and of those sons of God, that shouted for joy, when God laid the foundations of the earth, and laid the measures thereof, and stretched the line upon it." And so he must have a very great knowledge of God's works of providence. He has been a spectator of the series of these works from the beginning; he has seen how God has governed the world in all ages; and he has seen the whole train of God's wonderful successive dispensations of Providence towards his church from generation to generation. And he has not been an indifferent spectator; but the great opposition between God and him, in the whole course of those dispensations, has necessarily engaged his attention in the strictest observation of them. He must have a great degree of knowledge concerning Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of men, and the nature and method of the work of redemption, and the wonderful wisdom of God in this contrivance. It is that work of God wherein, above all others, God has acted in opposition to him, and in which he

has chiefly set himself in opposition to God. It is with relation to this affair, that the mighty warfare has been maintained, which has been carried on between Michael and his angels, and the devil and his angels, through all ages, from the beginning of the world, and especially since Christ appeared. The devil has had enough to engage his attention to the steps of divine wisdom in this work; for it is to that wisdom he has opposed his subtilty; and he has seen and found, to his great disappointment, and unspeakable torment, how divine wisdom, as exercised in that work, has baffled and confounded his devices. He has a great knowledge of the things of another world; for the things of that world are in his immediate view. He has a great knowledge of heaven, for he has been an inhabitant of that world of glory: and he has a great knowledge of hell, and the nature of its misery; for he is the first inhabitant of hell; and above all the other inhabitants, has experience of its torment, and has felt them constantly, for more than fifty-seven hundred years. He must have a great knowledge of the holy scriptures; for it is evident, he is not hindered from knowing what is written there, by the use he made of the words of scripture in his temptation of our Saviour. And if he can know, he has much opportunity to know, and must needs have a disposition to know, with the greatest exactness; that he may, to greater effect, pervert and wrest the scripture, and prevent such an effect of the word of God on the hearts of men, as shall tend to overthrow his kingdom. He must have a great knowledge of the nature of mankind, their capacity, their dispositions, and the corruptions of their hearts; for he has had long and great observation and experience. The heart of man is what he had chiefly to do with, in his subtle devices, mighty efforts, restless and indefatigable operations and exertions of himself, from the beginning of the world. And it is evident, that he has a great speculative knowledge of the nature of experimental religion, by his being able to imitate it so artfully, and in such a manner as to transform himself into an angel of light.

Therefore, it is manifest, from my text and doctrine, that no degree of speculative knowledge of religion, is any certain sign of true piety. Whatever clear notions a man may have of the attributes of God, the doctrine of the Trinity, the nature of the two covenants, the economy of the persons of the Trinity, and the part which each person has in the affair of man's redemption; if he can discourse never so excellently of the offices of Christ, and the way of salvation by him, and the admirable methods of divine wisdom, and the harmony of the various attributes of God in that way; if he can talk never so clearly and exactly, of the method of the justification of a sinner, and of the nature of conversion, and the operations of

the Spirit of God, in applying the redemption of Christ; giving good distinctions, happily solving difficulties, and answering objections, in a manner tending greatly to enlighten the ignorant, to the edification of the church of God, and the conviction of gainsayers, and the great increase of light in the world: If he has more knowledge of this sort than hundreds of true saints, of an ordinary education, and most divines; yet, all is no certain evidence of any degree of saving grace in the heart.

It is true, the scripture often speaks of knowledge of divine things, as what is peculiar to true saints; as in John xvii. 3. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Matthew xi. 27. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Psal. ix. 10. "They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee." Philip. iii. 8. "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." But then we must understand it of a different *kind* of knowledge from that speculative understanding which the devil has to so great a degree. It will be also allowed, that the spiritual saving knowledge of God and divine things, greatly promotes speculative knowledge, as it engages the mind in its search into things of this kind, and much assists to a distinct understanding of them; so that, other things being equal, they who have spiritual knowledge, are much more likely than others to have a good doctrinal acquaintance with things of religion; but yet such acquaintance may be no distinguishing characteristic of true saints.

III. It may, also, be inferred, from what has been observed, that for persons merely to yield a *speculative assent* to the doctrines of religion, as true, is no certain evidence of a state of grace. My text tells us, that the devils believe; and, as they believe that there is one God, so they believe the truth of the doctrines of religion in general. The devil is orthodox in his faith; he believes the true scheme of doctrine; he is no Deist, Socinian, Arian, Pelagian, or Antinomian; the articles of his faith are all sound, and in them he is thoroughly established.

Therefore, for a person to believe the doctrines of Christianity, merely from the force of arguments, as discerned only by speculation, is no evidence of grace.

It is probably a very rare thing for unregenerate men to have a strong persuasion of the truth of the doctrines of religion, especially such of them as are very mysterious, and much above the comprehension of reason. Yet, if he be very confident of the truth of Christianity and its doctrines, and is able

to argue most strongly for the proof of them, in this he goes nothing beyond the devil; who, doubtless, has a great knowledge of the rational arguments by which the truth of the Christian religion and its several principles are evinced.

And, therefore, when the scripture speaks of *believing that Jesus is the Son of God*, as a sure evidence of grace, as in 1 John v. 1. and other places, it must be understood, not of a mere speculative assent, but of *another kind and manner* of believing, which is called the faith of God's elect, Titus i. 1. There is a *spiritual* conviction of the truth, which is a believing with the whole heart, peculiar to true saints; of which I shall speak more particularly.

IV. It may be inferred from the doctrine which has been insisted on, that it is no certain sign of persons being savingly converted, that they have been subjects of very great *distress and terrors* of mind, through apprehensions of God's wrath, and fears of damnation.

That the devils are the subjects of great terrors, through apprehensions of God's wrath, and fears of its future effects, is implied in my text; which speaks not only of their believing, but *trembling*. It must be no small degree of terror which should make those principalities and powers, those mighty, proud, and sturdy beings, to tremble.

There are many terrors that some persons who are concerned for their salvation, are the subjects of, which are not from any proper awakenings of conscience, or apprehensions of truth, but from melancholy or frightful impressions on their imagination; or some groundless apprehensions, and the delusions and false suggestions of Satan. But if they have had never so great and long-continued terrors from real awakenings, and convictions of truth, and views of things as they are, this is no more than what is in the devils, and will be in all wicked men in another world. However stupid and senseless most ungodly men are now, all will be effectually awakened at last. There will be no such thing as slumbering in hell. There are many that cannot be awakened by the most solemn warnings and awful threatenings of the word of God—the most alarming discourses from the pulpit, and the most awakening and awful providences—but all will be thoroughly awakened by the sound of the last trumpet, and the appearance of Christ to judgment. All sorts will then be filled with most amazing terrors, from apprehensions of truth, and seeing things as they are; when "the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, (such as were the most lofty and stout-hearted, most ready to treat the things of religion with contempt,) shall hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and say to the

mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. vi. 15—17. Therefore, if persons have been first awakened, and afterwards have had comfort and joy, it is no certain sign that their comforts are of the right kind, because they were preceded by very great terrors.

V. It may be further inferred from the doctrine, That no *work of the law* on men's hearts, in conviction of guilt, and just desert of punishment, is a sure argument that a person has been savingly converted.

Not only are no awakenings and terrors any certain evidence of this, but no mere legal work whatsoever, though carried to the utmost extent. Nothing wherein there is no grace or spiritual light, but only the mere conviction of natural conscience, and those acts and operations of the mind, which are the result of this—and so are, as it were, merely forced by the clear light of conscience, without the concurrence of the heart and inclination with that light—is any certain sign of the saving grace of God, or that a person was ever savingly converted.

The evidence of this, from my text and doctrine, is demonstrative; because the devils are the subjects of these things; and all wicked men that shall finally perish, will be the subjects of the same. Natural conscience is not extinguished in the damned in hell; but, on the contrary, remains there in its greatest strength, and is brought to its most perfect exercise; most fully to do its proper office as God's vicegerent in the soul, to condemn those rebels against the King of heaven and earth, and manifest God's just wrath and vengeance, and by that means to torment them, and be as a never-dying worm within them. Wretched men find means in this world to blind the eyes and stop the mouth of this vicegerent of a sin-revenging God; but they shall not be able to do it always. In another world, the eyes and mouth of conscience will be fully opened. God will hereafter make wicked men to see and know these things from which now they industriously hide their eyes, Isa. xxvi. 10, 11. "Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people, yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them." We have this expression often annexed to God's threatenings of wrath to his enemies; "And they shall know that I am the Lord:" this shall be accomplished by their woful experience, and clear light in their consciences, whereby they shall be made to know, whether they will or not, how great and terrible, holy and righ-

teous a God Jehovah is, whose authority they have despised; and they shall know that he is righteous and holy in their destruction. This is all the ungodly will be convinced of at the day of judgment, by the bringing to light of all their wickedness of heart and practice; and setting all their sins, with all their aggravations, in order, not only in the view of others, even of the whole world, but in the view of their own consciences. This is threatened, Psalm l. 21. "These things thou hast done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." Compare this with the four first verses of the psalm. The design of the day of judgment is not to find out what is just, as it is with human judgments; but it is to *manifest* what is just; to make known God's justice in the judgment which he will execute, to men's own consciences, and to the world. And therefore that day is called "the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Rom. ii. 5. Now sinners often cavil against the justice of God's dispensations, and particularly the punishment which he threatens for their sins; excusing themselves and condemning him: but when God comes to manifest their wickedness in the light of that day, and to call them to an account, they will be speechless; Matt. xxii. 11, 12. "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless." When the King of heaven and earth comes to judgment, their consciences will be so perfectly enlightened and convinced by the all-searching Light they shall then stand in, that their mouths will be effectually stopped, as to all excuses for themselves, all pleading of their own righteousness to excuse or justify them, and all objections against the justice of their Judge, that their conscience will condemn them only, and not God.

Therefore it follows from the doctrine, that it can be no certain sign of grace, that persons have had great convictions of sin. Suppose they have had their sins of life, with their aggravations, remarkably set before them, so as greatly to affect and terrify them; and withal, have had a great sight of the wickedness of their hearts, the greatness of the sin of unbelief, and of the unexcusableness and heinousness of their most secret spiritual iniquities. Perhaps they have been convinced of the utter insufficiency of their own righteousness, and they despair of being recommended to God by it; have been convinced that they are wholly without excuse before God, and deserve damnation; and that God would be just in executing the threatened punishment upon them, though it be so dreadful. All these things will be in the ungodly at the day of judgment, when they shall stand with devils, at the left hand, and shall be doomed as accursed to everlasting fire with them.

Indeed there will be no submission in them. Their conscience will be convinced that God is just in their condemnation; but yet their wills will not be bowed to God's justice. There will be no acquiescence of mind in that divine attribute; no yielding of the soul to God's sovereignty, but the highest degree of enmity and opposition. A true submission of the heart and will to the justice and sovereignty of God, is therefore allowed to be something peculiar to true converts, being something which the devils and damned souls are and ever will be far from; and to which a mere work of the law, and convictions of conscience, however great and clear, will never bring men.

When sinners are the subjects of great convictions of conscience, and a remarkable work of the law, it is only transacting the business of the day of judgment in the conscience beforehand. God sits enthroned in the conscience, as at the last day he will sit enthroned in the clouds of heaven; the sinner is arraigned as it were at God's bar: and God appears in his awful greatness, as a just and holy, sin-hating, and sin-revenging God, as he will then. The sinner's iniquities are brought to light; his sins set in order before him: the hidden things of darkness, and the counsels of the heart are made manifest, as it will be then. Many witnesses do, as it were, rise up against the sinner under convictions of conscience, as they will against the wicked at the day of judgment; and the books are opened, particularly the book of God's strict and holy law is opened in the conscience, and its rules applied for the condemnation of the sinner: which is the book that will be opened at the day of judgment, as the grand rule to all such wicked men as have lived under it. And the sentence of the law is pronounced against the sinner, and the justice of the sentence made manifest, as it will be at the day of judgment. The conviction of a sinner at the day of judgment will be a work of the law, as well as the conviction of conscience in this world: and the work of the law (if the work be merely legal) is never carried farther in the consciences of sinners now than it will be at that day, when its work will be perfect in thoroughly stopping the sinner's mouth; Rom. iii. 19. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Every mouth shall be stopped by the law, either now or hereafter; and all the world shall become sensibly guilty before God, guilty of death, deserving of damnation.—And therefore, if sinners have been the subjects of a great work of the law, and have thus become guilty, and their mouths have been stopped; it is no certain sign that ever they have been converted.

Indeed the want of a thorough sense of guilt, and desert of punishment, and conviction of the justice of God, in threatening damnation, is a sign that a person never was converted, and truly brought, with the whole soul, to embrace Christ as a Sa-

viour from this punishment: for it is easily demonstrable, that there is no such thing as entirely and cordially accepting an offer of a Saviour from a punishment which we think we do not deserve. But having such a conviction is no certain sign that persons have true faith, or have ever truly received Christ as their Saviour. And if persons have great comfort, joy, and confidence suddenly let into their minds, after great convictions, it is no infallible evidence that their comforts are built on a good foundation.

It is manifest, therefore, that too much stress has been laid by many persons, on a great work of the law preceding their comforts; who seem not only to have looked on such a work of the law as necessary to precede faith, but also to have esteemed it as the chief evidence of the truth and genuineness of succeeding faith and comforts. By this means it is to be feared very many have been deceived, and established in a false hope. And what is to be seen in the event of things, in multitudes of instances, confirms this. It may be safely allowed that it is not so usual for great convictions of conscience to prove abortive, and fail of a good issue, as for lesser convictions; and that more generally when the Spirit of God proceeds so far with sinners, in the work of the law, as to give them a great sight of their hearts, and of the heinousness of their spiritual iniquities; and to convince them that they are without excuse;—and that all their righteousness can do nothing to merit God's favours; but they lie justly exposed to God's eternal vengeance without mercy —a work of saving conversion follows. But we can have no warrant to say it is universally so, or to lay it down as an infallible rule, that when convictions of conscience have gone thus far, saving faith and repentance will surely follow. If any should think they have ground for such a determination, because they cannot conceive what end God should have in carrying a work of conviction to such a length, and so preparing the heart for faith, and after all, never giving saving faith to the soul; I desire it may be considered, where will be the end of our doubts and difficulties, if we think ourselves sufficient to determine so positively and particularly concerning God's ends and designs in what he does. It may be asked such an objector, what is God's end in giving a sinner any degree of the strivings of his Spirit, and conviction of conscience, when he afterwards suffers it to come to nothing?

If he may give some degree that may finally be in vain, who shall set the bounds, and say how great the degree shall be? Who can, on sure grounds, determine, that when a sinner has so much of that conviction which the devils and damned in hell have, true faith and eternal salvation will be the certain consequence? This we may certainly determine, that, if the apostle's argument in the text be good, not any thing whatsoever

that the devils have is certainly connected with such a consequence. Seeing sinners, while such, are capable of the most perfect convictions, and will have them at the day of judgment, and in hell; who shall say that God never shall cause reprobates to anticipate the future judgment and damnation in that respect? And if he does so, who shall say to him, what doest thou? Or call him to account concerning his ends in so doing? Not but that many possible wise ends might be thought of, and mentioned, if it were needful, or I had now room for it.—The Spirit of God is often quenched by the exercise of the wickedness of men's hearts, after he has gone far in a work of conviction, so that their convictions never have a good issue. And who can say that sinners, by the exercise of their opposition and enmity against God, which is not at all mortified by the greatest legal convictions, neither in the damned in hell, nor sinners on earth, may not provoke God to take his Spirit from them, even after he has proceeded the greatest length in a work of conviction? Who can say that God never is provoked to destroy some, after he has brought them, as it were, through the wilderness, even to the edge of the land of rest? As he slew some of the Israelites, even in the plains of Moab.

And let it be considered, where is our warrant in scripture to make use of any legal convictions, or any method or order of successive events in a work of the law, and consequent comforts, as a sure sign of regeneration. The scripture is abundant in expressly mentioning evidences of grace, and of a state of favour with God, as characteristics of true saints. But where do we ever find such things as these amongst those evidences? Or where do we find any other signs insisted on, besides grace itself, its nature, exercises, and fruits? These were the evidences that Job relied upon: these were the things that the Psalmist every where insists upon as evidences of his sincerity, and particularly in the 119th Psalm, from the beginning to the end: these were the signs that Hezekiah trusted to in his sickness.

These were the characteristics of those that are truly happy, given by our Saviour in the beginning of his sermon on the Mount. These are the things that Christ mentions, as the true evidences of being his real disciples, in his last and dying discourse to his disciples, in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of John, and in his intercessary prayer, chap. xvii. These are the things which the apostle Paul often speaks of as evidences of his sincerity, and sure title to a crown of glory. And these are the things he often mentions to others, in his epistles, as the proper evidences of real Christianity, a justified state, and a title to glory. He insists on the fruits of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, as the proper evidences of being Christ's, and

living in the Spirit: Gal. v. 22—25. It is that charity, or divine love, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy, &c. that he insists on, as the most essential evidence of true godliness; without which, all other things are nothing. Such are the signs which the apostle James insists on, as the proper evidence of a truly wise and good man: James iii. 17. "The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." And such are the signs of true Christianity, which the apostle John insists on throughout his epistles. And we never have, any where in the Bible, from the beginning to the end of it, any other signs of godliness given, than such as these. If persons have such things as these apparently in them, it ought to be determined that they are truly converted, without its being first known what method the Spirit of God took to introduce these things into the soul, which oftentimes is altogether untraceable. All the works of God are, in some respects, unsearchable: but the scripture often represents the works of the Spirit of God, as peculiarly so; Isaiah xl. 13. "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him?" Eccles. xi. 5. "As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: so thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all." John iii. 8. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

VI. It follows from my text, and doctrine, That it is no certain sign of grace, that persons have earnest desires and longings after salvation.

The devils, doubtless, long for deliverance from the misery they suffer, and from that greater misery which they expect. If they tremble through fear of it, they must, necessarily, earnestly desire to be delivered from it. Wicked men are, in scripture, represented as longing for the privileges of the righteous, when the door is shut, and they are shut out from among them: They come to the door, and cry, Lord, Lord, open to us. Therefore, we are not to look on all desires that are very earnest and vehement, as certain evidences of a pious heart. There are earnest desires of a religious nature, which the saints have, that are the proper breathings of a new nature, and distinguishing qualities of true saints: but there are, also, longings, which unregenerate men may have, which are often mistaken for marks of godliness. They think they hunger and thirst after righteousness, and have earnest desires after God and Christ, and long for heaven; when, indeed, all is to be resolved

into self-love; and so is a longing which arises from no higher principles than the earnest desires of devils.

VII. It may be inferred, from what has been observed, That persons who have no grace, may have a great apprehension of an external glory in things, heavenly and divine, and of whatsoever is external pertaining to religion.

If persons have impressed strongly on their minds ideas obtained by the external senses, whether by the ear, as any kind of sound, pleasant music, or words spoken of excellent signification; words of scripture, suitable to their case, or adapted to the subject of their meditations: or ideas obtained by the eye, as of a visible beauty and glory, a shining light, golden streets, gates of precious stone, a most magnificent throne, surrounded by angels and saints, in shining ranks: or, any thing external belonging to Jesus Christ, either in his humbled state, as hanging on the cross, with his crown of thorns, his wounds open, and blood trickling down; or in his glorified state, with awful majesty, or ravishing beauty, and sweetness in his countenance; his face shining above the brightness of the sun, and the like: these things are no certain signs of grace.

Multitudes that are now in hell, will have ideas of the external glory that pertains to things heavenly, far beyond whatever any have in this world. They will see all that external glory and beauty, in which Christ will appear at the day of judgment, when the sun shall be turned into darkness before him; which, doubtless, will be ten thousand times greater than ever was impressed on the imagination of either saints or sinners in this present state, or ever was conceived by any mortal man.

VIII. It may be inferred from the doctrine, That persons who have no grace may have a very great and affecting sense of many divine things on their hearts.

The devil has not only great speculative knowledge, but he has a sense of many divine things, which deeply affects him, and is most strongly impressed on his heart. As,

1. The devils and damned souls have a great sense of the vast importance of the things of another world. They are in the invisible world, and they see and know how great the things of that world are: their experience teaches them in the most affecting manner. They have a great sense of the worth of salvation, and the worth of immortal souls, and the vast importance of those things that concern men's eternal welfare. The parable in the latter end of the 16th chapter of Luke teaches this, in representing the rich man in hell, as entreating that Lazarus might be sent to his five brothers, to testify unto them, lest they should come to that place of torment. They who endure

the torments of hell have doubtless a most lively and affecting sense of the vastness of an endless eternity, and of the comparative momentariness of this life, and the vanity of the concerns and enjoyments of time.—They are convinced effectually, that all the things of this world, even those that appear greatest and most important to the inhabitants of the earth, are despicable trifles, in comparison of the things of the eternal world. They have a great sense of the preciousness of time, and of the means of grace, and the inestimable value of the privileges which they enjoy which live under the gospel. They are fully sensible of the folly of those that go on in sin; neglect their opportunities; make light of the counsels and warnings of God; and bitterly lament their exceeding folly in their own sins, by which they have brought on themselves so great and remediless misery. When sinners, by woful experience, know the dreadful issue of their evil way, they will mourn at the last, saying, how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! Prov. iv. 11, 12, 13.

Therefore, however true godliness is now attended with a great sense of the importance of divine things—and it is rare that men who have no grace maintain such a sense in any steady and persevering manner—yet it is manifest those things are no certain evidences of grace. Unregenerate men may have a sense of the importance of eternity, and the vanity of time; the worth of immortal souls; the preciousness of time and the means of grace, and the folly of the way of allowed sin. They may have such a sense of those things, as may deeply affect them, and cause them to mourn for their own sins, and be much concerned for others; though it be true, they have not these things in the same manner, and in all respects from the same principles and views as godly men have them.

2. Devils and damned men have a strong and most affecting sense of the awful greatness and majesty of God. This is greatly made manifest in the execution of divine vengeance on his enemies. Rom. ix. 22. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" The devils tremble before this great and terrible God, and under a strong sense of his awful majesty. It is greatly manifested to them and damned souls now; but shall be manifested in a further degree, in that day when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance upon them; and when they shall earnestly desire to fly, and be hid from the face of him that sits on the throne, (which shall be, "because of the glory of his majesty," Isa. ii. 10,) and when they shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. When Christ comes at

the last day, in the glory of his Father, every eye shall see him in that glory, (in this respect, that they shall see his terrible majesty,) and they also that pierced him, Rev. i. 7. Both those devils and wicked men, which tormented and insulted him when he appeared in meanness and ignominy, shall then see him in the glory of his Father.

It is evident, therefore, that a sense of God's terrible majesty is no certain evidence of saving grace: for we see that wicked men and devils are capable of it; yea, many wicked men in this world have actually had it. This is a manifestation which God made of himself in the sight of that wicked congregation at Mount Sinai, which they saw, and with which they were deeply affected, so that all the people in the camp trembled.

3. Devils and damned men have some kind of conviction and sense of all attributes of God, both natural and moral, that is strong and very affecting.

The devils know God's almighty *power:* they saw a great manifestation of it, when they saw God lay the foundation of the earth, &c., and were much affected with it.—They have seen innumerable other great demonstrations of his power; as in the universal deluge, the destruction of Sodom, the wonders in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness; causing the sun to stand still in Joshua's time, and many others. And they had a very affecting manifestation of God's mighty power on themselves, in casting all their hosts down from heaven into hell; and have continual affecting experience of it, in God's reserving them in strong chains of darkness, and in the strong pains they feel. They will hereafter have far more affecting experience of it, when they shall be punished from the glory of God's power, with that mighty destruction, in expectation of which, they now tremble. So the devils have a great knowledge of the *wisdom* of God: they have had unspeakably more opportunity and occasion to observe it in the work of creation, and also in the works of Providence, than any mortal man has ever had; and have been themselves the subjects of innumerable affecting manifestations of it, in God's disappointing and confounding them in their most subtle devices, in so wonderful and amazing a manner. So they see and find the infinite purity and *holiness* of the divine nature, in the most affecting manner, as this appears in his infinite hatred of sin, in what they feel of the dreadful effects of that hatred. They know already, by what they suffer, and will know hereafter to a greater degree, and far more affecting manner, that such is the opposition of God's nature to sin, that it is like a consuming fire, which burns with infinite vehemence against it. They, also, will see the holiness of God, as exercised in his love to righteousness and holiness, in the glory of Christ and his church; which, also, will be very affecting to

devils and wicked men. And the exact *justice* of God will be manifested to them in the clearest and strongest, most convincing, and most affecting light, at the day of judgment; when they will also see great and affecting demonstrations of the riches of his *grace*, in the marvellous fruits of his love to the vessels of *mercy;* when they shall see them at the right hand of Christ, shining as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, and shall hear the blessed sentence pronounced upon them; and will be deeply affected with it, as seems naturally implied in Luke xiii. 28, 29. The devils know God's *truth*, and, therefore, they believe his threatenings, and tremble in expectation of their accomplishment. And wicked men, that now doubt his truth, and dare not trust his word, will, hereafter, in the most convincing, affecting manner, find his word to be true in all that he has threatened, and will see that he is faithful to his promises in the rewards of his saints. Devils and damned men know that God is eternal and unchangeable; and, therefore, they despair of there ever being an end to their misery. Therefore, it is manifest, that merely persons having an affecting sense of some, or even of all God's attributes, is no certain sign that they have the true grace of God in their hearts.

OBJECT. Here, possibly, some may object against the force of the foregoing reasoning, That ungodly men in this world are in exceeding different circumstances from those in which the devils are, and from those which wicked men will be in at the day of judgment. Those things which are visible and present to these, are now future and invisible to the other; and wicked men in this world are in the body, that clogs and hinders the soul, and are encompassed with objects that blind and stupify them. Therefore, it does not follow, that because the wicked in another world have a great apprehension and lively sense of such things, without grace, ungodly men in their present state may have the same.

ANS. To this I answer: It is not supposed, that ever men in this life have all those things which have been mentioned, to the same *degree* that the devils and damned have them.—None suppose, that ever any in this life have terrors of conscience to an equal degree with them. It is not to be supposed, that any mortal man, whether godly or ungodly, has an equal degree of speculative knowledge with the devil. And, as was just now observed, the wicked, at the day of judgment, will have a vastly greater idea of the external glory of Christ, than ever any have in the present state. So, doubtless, they will have a far greater sense of God's awful greatness and terrible majesty, than any could subsist under in this frail state. So we may well conclude, that the devils and wicked men in hell, have a greater and more affecting sense of the vastness of eter-

nity, and, (in some respects,) a greater sense of the importance of the things of another world, than any here have; and they have, also, longings after salvation to a higher degree than any wicked men in this world.

But yet it is evident, that men in this world may have things of the same *kind* with devils and damned men: the same sort of light in the understanding; the same views and affections, the same sense of things, the same kind of impressions on the mind, and on the heart. The objection is against the conclusiveness of that reasoning which is the apostle's, more properly than mine. The apostle judged it a conclusive argument against such as thought their believing there was one God, an evidence of their being gracious, that the devils believed the same. So the argument is exactly the same against such as think they have grace, because they believe God is a holy God, or because they have a sense of the awful majesty of God.—The same may be observed of other things that have been mentioned. My text has reference, not only to the act of the understandings of devils in believing, but to that affection of their hearts which accompanies the views they have; as trembling is an effect of the affection of the heart. Which shows, that if men have both the same views of understanding, and, also, the same affections of heart that the devils have, it is no sign of grace.

And as to the particular degree to which these things may be carried in men in this world without grace, it apppears not safe to make use of it as an infallible rule to determine men's state. I know not where we have any rule to go by, to fix the precise degree in which God by his providence, or his common influences on the mind, will excite in wicked men in this world, the same views and affections which the wicked have in another world; which, it is manifest, the former are capable of as well as the latter, having the same faculties and principles of soul; and which views and affections, it is evident, they often are actually the subjects of in some degree, some in a greater, and some in a less degree. The infallible evidences of grace which are laid down in scripture are of another kind: they are all of a holy and spiritual nature; and therefore things of that kind which a heart that is wholly carnal and corrupt cannot receive or experience, 1 Cor. ii. 14. I might also here add, that observation and experience, in very many instances, seem to confirm what scripture and reason teaches in these things.

The *second* use may be of *self-examination*.

Let the things which have been observed put all on examining themselves, and inquiring, whether they have any better evidences of saving grace, than such as have been mentioned.

We see how the infallible Spirit of God, in the text, plainly represents the things of which the devils are the subjects, as no sure sign of grace. And we have now, in some instances, observed how far the devils and damned men go, and will go in their experience, their knowledge of divine things, their belief of truth, their awakenings and terrors of conscience, their conviction of guilt, and of the justice of God in their eternal dreadful damnation, their longings after salvation, their sight of the external glory of Christ and heavenly things, their sense of the vast importance of the things of religion, and another world; their sense of the awful greatness and terrible majesty of God, yea, of all God's attributes. These things may well put us on serious self-examination, whether we have any thing to evidence our good estate, beyond what the devils have. Christ said to his disciples, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven:" so the Spirit of Christ, in his apostle James, does in effect say, in my text, Except what you experience in your souls go beyond the experiences of devils, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God.

Here, it may be, some will be ready to say, I have something besides all these things; what the devils have not, even love and joy.

I answer, You may have something besides the experiences of devils, and yet nothing beyond them. Though the experience be different, yet it may not be owing to any different principle, but only the different circumstances under which these principles are exercised. The principles from whence the fore-mentioned things in devils and damned men arise, are these two, natural understanding and self-love. It is from these principles of natural understanding and self-love, as exercised about their own dispositions and actions, and God as their judge, that they have natural conscience, and have such convictions of conscience as have been spoken of. It is from these principles that they have such a sense of the importance of the things of religion, and the eternal world, and such longings after salvation. It is from the joint exercise of these two principles that they are so sensible of the awful majesty of God, and of all the attributes of the divine nature, and so greatly affected with them. And it is from these principles, joined with external sense, the wicked, at the day of judgment, will have so great an apprehension of, and will be so greatly affected by the external glory of Christ and his saints. And that you have a kind of love, or gratitude and joy, which devils and damned men have not, may possibly not arise from any other principles in your heart different from these two, but only from these principles as exercised in different circumstances. As for instance, your being a subject of the restraining grace of God, and under circumstances of hope.

The natural understanding and self-love of devils possibly might affect them in the same manner, if they were in the same circumstances. If your love to God has its first source from nothing else than a supposed immediate divine witness, or any other supposed evidence, that Christ died for you in particular, and that God loves you; it springs from no higher principles than self-love; which is a principle that reigns in the hearts of devils. Self-love is sufficient, without grace, to cause men to love those that love them, or that they imagine love them, and make much of them; Luke vi. 32. "For if ye love them which love you, what thank have you? For sinners also love those that love them." And would not the hearts of devils be filled with great joy, if they, by any means, should take up a confident persuasion that God pardoned them, and was become their friend, and that they should be delivered from that wrath of which they now are in trembling expectation. If the devils go so far as you have heard, even in their circumstances, being totally cast off, and given up to unrestrained wickedness, being without hope, knowing that God is, and ever will be their enemy, they suffering his wrath without mercy: how far may we reasonably suppose they might go, in imitation of grace and pious experience, if they had the same degree of knowledge, as clear views, and as strong conviction, under circumstances of hope, and offers of mercy; and being the subjects of common grace, restraining their corruptions, and assisting and exciting the natural principles of reason, conscience, &c.? Such things, or any thing like them, in the heart of a sinner in this world; at the same time that he, from some strong impression on his imagination, has suddenly, after great terrors, imbibed a confidence, that now this great God is his Friend and Father, has released him from all the misery he feared, and has promised him eternal happiness: I say, such things would, doubtless, vastly heighten his ecstacy of joy, and raise the exercise of natural gratitude, (that principle from whence sinners love those that love them,) and would occasion a great imitation of many graces in strong exercises. Is it any wonder then that multitudes under such a sort of affection are deceived? Especially when they have devils to help forward the delusion, whose great subtilty has chiefly been exercised in deceiving mankind through all past generations.

Inq. Here possibly some may be ready to inquire, If there be so many things which men may experience from no higher principles than are in the minds and hearts of devils; what are those exercises and affections that are of a higher nature, which I must find in my heart, and which I may justly look upon as sure signs of the saving grace of God's Spirit?

ANS. I answer, those exercises and affections which are good evidences of grace, differ from all that the devils have, and all that can arise from such principles as are in their hearts, in two things, *viz.* their *foundation* and their *tendency*.

1. They differ in their *foundation*, or in that belonging to them which is the foundation of all the rest that pertains to them, *viz.* an apprehension or sense of the *supreme holy beauty* and comeliness of divine things, as they are in themselves, or in their own nature.

Of this the devils and damned in hell are, and for ever will be, entirely destitute. This the devils once had, while they stood in their integrity; but they wholly lost it when they fell. And this is the *only* thing that can be mentioned pertaining to the devil's apprehension and sense of the divine Being, that he did lose. Nothing else belonging to the knowledge of God can be devised, of which he is destitute. It has been observed that there is no one *attribute* of the divine nature, but what he knows, with a strong and very affecting conviction. This I think is evident and undeniable. But to the supreme beauty of the divine nature he is altogether blind. He sees no more of it, than a man born perfectly blind does of colours. The great sight he has of the attributes of God gives him an idea and strong sense of his awful majesty, but no idea of his beauty and comeliness. Though he has seen so much of God's wonderful works of power, wisdom, holiness, justice, and truth, and his wonderful works of grace to mankind, for so many thousand years, and has had occasion to observe them with the strongest attention; yet all serves not to give him the least sense of his divine beauty. And though the devils should continue to exercise their mighty powers of mind with the strongest intention; and should take things in all possible views, in every order and arrangement; yet they never will see this. So little akin is the knowledge they have to this, that the great degrees of that knowledge bring them no nearer to it. Yet the more knowledge they have of God of that kind, the more do they hate God. That wherein the beauty of the divine nature does most essentially consist, *viz.* his holiness, or moral excellency, appears in their eyes farthest from beauty. It is on that very account chiefly that he appears hateful to them. The more holiness they see in him, the more hateful he appears: the greater their sight is of his holiness, the higher is their hatred of him raised. And because of their hatred of his holiness, they hate him the more, the more they see of his other attributes. They would hate a holy Being, whatever his other attributes were; but they hate such a holy Being the worse, for his being infinitely wise, and infinitely powerful, &c. more than they would do, if they saw in him less power and less wisdom.

The wicked, at the day of judgment, will see every thing else in Christ but his beauty and amiableness. There is no one

quality or property of his person that can be thought of, but what will be set before them in the strongest light at that day, but only such as consist in this. They will see him coming in the clouds of heaven, "in power, and great glory, in the glory of his Father." They will have that view of his external glory, which is vastly beyond what we can imagine; and they will have the strongest and most convincing demonstrations of all his attributes and perfections. They will have a sense of his great majesty, that will be, as it were, infinitely affecting to them. They shall be made to know effectually, "that he is the Lord." They shall see what he is, and what he does; his nature and works shall appear in the strongest view: but his infinite beauty and amiableness, which is all in all, and without which every other property is nothing, and worse than nothing, they will not see.

Therefore in a sight or sense of this, fundamentally consists the difference between the saving grace of God's Spirit, and the experiences of devils and damned souls. This is the foundation of every thing else that is distinguishing in true Christian experience. This is the foundation of the faith of God's elect. This gives the mind a saving belief of the truth of divine things. It is a view of the excellency of the gospel, or sense of the divine beauty and amiableness of the scheme of doctrine there exhibited, that savingly convinces the mind that it is indeed divine or of God. This account of the matter is plainly implied; 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them." And, verse 6, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." It is very evident that a saving belief of the gospel is here spoken of by the apostle, as arising from a view of the divine glory or beauty of the things it exhibits. It is by this view that the soul of a true convert is enabled savingly to see the sufficiency of Christ for his salvation. He that has his eyes opened to behold the divine superlative beauty and loveliness of Jesus Christ, is convinced of his sufficiency to stand as a Mediator between him, a guilty hell-deserving wretch, and an infinitely holy God, in an exceeding different manner than ever he can be convinced by the arguments of authors or preachers, however excellent.

When he once comes to see Christ's divine loveliness, he wonders no more that he is thought worthy by God the Father, to be accepted for the vilest sinner. Now it is not difficult for him to conceive how the blood of Christ should be esteemed by God so precious as to be worthy to be accepted as a compensa-

tion for the greatest sins. The soul now properly sees the preciousness of Christ, and so does properly see and understand the very ground and reason of his acceptableness to God, and the value God sets on his blood, obedience, and intercession. This satisfies the poor guilty soul, and gives it rest, when the finest and most elaborate discourses about the sufficiency of Christ and suitableness of the way of salvation, would not do it. When a man comes to see the proper foundation of faith and affiance with his own eyes, then he believes savingly. "He that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life;" John vi. 40. When Christ thus manifests God's name to men, then they believe that all things whatsoever God has given to Christ are of him, and believe that Christ was sent of God; John xvii. 6, 7, 8. And "they that thus know Christ's name will trust in him;" Psalm ix. 10. In order to true faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God is revealed in men, Gal. i. 15, 16. And it is this sight of the divine beauty of Christ, that bows the wills, and draws the hearts of men. A sight of the greatness of God in his attributes may overwhelm men, and be more than they can endure; but the enmity and opposition of the heart may remain in its full strength, and the will remain inflexible. Whereas one glimpse of the moral and spiritual glory of God, and the supreme amiableness of Jesus Christ shining into the heart, overcomes and abolishes this opposition, and inclines the soul to Christ, as it were, by an omnipotent power. So that now, not only the understanding, but the will and the whole soul receives and embraces the Saviour. This is most certainly the discovery, which is the first internal foundation of a saving faith in Christ in the soul of the true convert, and not any immediate outward or inward witness that Christ loves him, or that he died for him in particular, and is his Saviour; so begetting confidence and joy, and a seeming love to Christ, because he loves him. By such faith and conversion, (demonstrably vain and counterfeit,) multitudes have been deluded. The sight of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, works true supreme love to God. This is a sight of the proper foundation of supreme love to God. viz. *the supreme loveliness of his nature;* and a love to him on this ground is truly above any thing that can come from a mere principle of self-love, which is in the hearts of devils as well as men. And this begets true spiritual and holy joy in the soul, which is indeed joy in God, and glorying in him, and not rejoicing in ourselves.

This sight of the beauty of divine things, will excite true desires and longings of soul after those things; not like the longings of devils, but natural, free desires; the desires of appetite, the thirstings of a new nature, as a new-born babe desires the mother's breast; and as a hungry man longs for some

pleasant food he thinks of; or, as the thirsty hart pants after the cool and clear stream.

This *sense of divine beauty* is the first thing in the actual change made in the soul in true conversion, and is the foundation of every thing else belonging to that change; as is evident by those words of the apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 18. "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

2. Truly gracious affections and exercises of mind differ from such as are counterfeit, which arise from no higher principles than are in the hearts of devils, in their *tendency;* and that in these two respects.

(1.) They are of a tendency and influence very contrary to that which was especially the devil's sin, even pride. That pride was in a peculiar manner the devil's sin, is manifest from 1 Tim. iii. 6. "Not a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." False and delusive experiences evermore tend to this, though oftentimes under the disguise of great and extraordinary humility. Spiritual pride is the prevailing temper and general character of hypocrites, deluded with false discoveries and affections.—They are, in general, of a disposition directly contrary to those two things belonging to the Christian temper, directed to by the apostle; the one in Rom. xii. 16. "Be not wise in your own conceit;" and the other in Phil. ii. 3. "Let each esteem others better than themselves." False experience is conceited of itself, and affected with itself. Thus he that has false humility, is much affected to think how he is abased before God.—He that has false love, is affected, when he thinks of the greatness of his love. The very food and nourishment of false experience, is to view itself, and take much notice of itself; and, its very breath and life is to be some way showing itself.—Whereas, truly gracious views and affections, are of a quite contrary tendency. They nourish no self-conceit; no exalting notion of the man's own righteousness, experience, or privileges; no high conceit of his humiliations. They incline to no ostentation, nor self-exaltation, under any disguise whatsoever. But that sense of the supreme, holy beauty, and glory of God and Christ, which is the foundation of them, mortifies pride, and truly humbles the soul. It not only cuts off some of the outermost branches, but it strikes at the very root of pride; it alters the very nature and disposition of the heart. The light of God's beauty, and that alone, truly shows the soul its own deformity, and effectually inclines it to exalt God and abase itself.

(2.) These gracious exercises and affections differ from the other in their tendency to destroy Satan's interest; and that in two respects:

First, in the *person himself*. They cause the soul to hate every evil and false way, and to produce universal holiness of heart and life, disposing him to make the service of God, the promotion of his glory, and the good of mankind, the very business of his life; whereas those false discoveries and affections have not this effect. There may, indeed, be great zeal, and a great deal of what is called religion; but it is not a truly Christian zeal; it is not being zealous of good works. Their religion is not the service of God; it is not seeking and serving God; but, indeed, seeking and serving themselves. Though there may be a change of life, it is not a change from every wicked way to a uniform Christian life and practice, but only turning the stream of corruption from one channel to another. Thus the apostle James distinguishes, in our context, a true faith from the faith of devils; James ii. 19, 20. "Thou believest that there is one God. The devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" And thus the apostle John distinguishes true communion with God; 1 John i. 6, 7. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin." By this he distinguishes true spiritual knowledge, chap. ii. 3, 4. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." And hereby the same apostle distinguishes true love, chap. iii. 18, 19. "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed (in *work*, as the word signifies) and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."

2. Truly gracious experiences have a tendency to destroy Satan's interest in *the world*.

When false religion, consisting in the counterfeits of the operations of the Spirit of God, and in high pretences and great appearances of inward experimental religion, prevails among a people—though for the present it may surprise many, and may be the occasion of alarming and awakening some sinners—it tends greatly to wound and weaken the cause of vital religion, and to strengthen the interest of Satan, desperately to harden the hearts of sinners, exceedingly to fill the world with prejudice against the power of godliness, to promote infidelity and licentious principles and practices, to build up and make strong the devil's kingdom in the world, more than open vice and pro-

faineness, or professed Atheism, or public persecution, and, perhaps, more than any thing else whatsoever.

But it is not so with true religion, in its genuine beauty.—That, if it prevails in great power, will, doubtless, excite the rage of the devil, and many other enemies of religion. However, it gives great advantage to its friends, and exceedingly strengthens their cause, and tends to convince or confound enemies. True religion is a divine light in the souls of the saints; and, as it shines out in the conversation before men, it tends to induce others to glorify God. There is nothing like it (as to means) to awaken the consciences of men, to convince infidels, and to stop the mouths of gainsayers.—Though men naturally hate the power of godliness, yet when they see the fruits of it, there is a witness in their consciences in its favour. "He that serveth Christ in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, is acceptable to God, and approved of men," Rom. xiv. 17, 18. The prevailing of true religion, ever tends to its honour in the world, though it commonly is the occasion of great persecution. It is a sure thing, the more it appears, and is exemplified in the view of the world, the more will its honour, and the honour of its author, be advanced. Phil. i. 11. "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God."

The *third* use may be of *exhortation*, to seek those distinguishing qualifications and affections of soul, which neither the devil, nor any unholy being, has, or can have.

How excellent is that inward virtue and religion which consists in those! Herein consists the most excellent experiences of saints and angels in heaven. Herein consists the best experience of the man Christ Jesus, whether in his humbled or glorified state. Herein consists the image of God.—Yea, this is spoken of in scripture as a communication of something of God's own beauty and excellency. A participation of the divine nature, 2 Peter i. 4. A partaking of his holiness, Heb. xii. 10. A partaking of Christ's fulness, John i. 16. Hereby the saints are filled with all the fulness of God, Eph. iii. 18, 19. Hereby they have fellowship with both the Father and the Son, 1 John i. 3; that is, they communicate with them in their happiness. Yea, by means of this divine virtue, there is a mutual indwelling of God and the saints; 1 John iv. 16. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

This qualification must render the person that has it, excellent and happy indeed, and doubtless is the highest dignity and blessedness of any creature. This is the peculiar gift of God, which he bestows only on his special favourites. As to silver, gold, and diamonds, earthly crowns and kingdoms, he often throws them out to those whom he esteems as dogs and

swine; but this is the peculiar blessing of his dear children.—This is what flesh and blood cannot impart. God alone can bestow it. This was the special benefit which Christ died to procure for his elect, the most excellent token of his everlasting love; the chief fruit of his great labours, and the most precious purchase of his blood.

By this, above all other things, do men glorify God. By this, above all other things, do the saints shine as lights in the world, and are blessings to mankind. And this, above all things, tends to their own comfort; from hence arises that "peace which passeth all understanding," and that "joy which is unspeakable and full of glory." And this is that which will most certainly issue in the eternal salvation of those who have it. It is impossible that the soul possessing it, should sink and perish. It is an immortal seed; it is eternal life begun; and, therefore, they that have it, can never die. It is the dawning of the light of glory. It is the day-star risen in the heart, that is a sure forerunner of that sun's rising which will bring on an everlasting day. This is that water which Christ gives; which is in him that drinks it, "a well of water springing up into everlasting life;" John iv. 14. It is something from heaven, of a heavenly nature, and tends to heaven. And those that have it, however they may now wander in a wilderness, or be tossed to and fro on a tempestuous ocean, shall certainly arrive in heaven at last, where this heavenly spark shall be increased and perfected, and the souls of the saints all be transformed into a bright and pure flame, and they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Amen.

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HEBREWS v. 12.

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

THESE words are a complaint which the apostle makes against the Christian Hebrews, for their want of such proficiency in the knowledge of the doctrines and mysteries of religion, as might have been expected of them. The apostle complains, that they had not made that progress in their acquaintance with the things taught in the oracles of God which they ought to have made. And he means to reprove them, not merely for their deficiency in *spiritual* and *experimental* knowledge of divine things, but for their deficiency in a *doctrinal* acquaintance with the principles of religion, and the truths of Christian divinity; as is evident by the manner in which the apostle introduces this reproof. The occasion of his introducing it is this: in the next verse but one preceding, he mentions Christ as being "called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedec." In the Old Testament, the oracles of God, Melchizedec was held forth as an eminent type of Christ; and the account we there have of him contains many gospel mysteries. These mysteries the apostle was willing to point out to the Christian Hebrews; but he apprehended, that through their weakness in knowledge, they would not understand him: and therefore breaks off for the present from saying any thing about Melchizedec, thus, (ver. 11.) "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered; seeing ye are all dull of hearing;" *i. e.*

there are many things concerning Melchizedec which contain wonderful gospel mysteries, and which I would take notice of to you, were it not that I am afraid, that through your dulness, and backwardness in understanding these things, you would only be puzzled and confounded by my discourse, and so receive no benefit: and that it would be too hard for you, as meat that is too strong.

Then come in the words of the text: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as need of milk, and not of strong meat:" As much as to say, indeed it might have been expected of you, that you should have known enough of the holy scriptures, to be able to understand and digest such mysteries: but it is not so with you. The apostle speaks of their proficiency in such knowledge as is conveyed by *human* teaching: as appears by that expression, "When for the time ye ought to be teachers;" which includes not only a practical and experimental, but also a *doctrinal knowledge* of the truths and mysteries of religion.

Again, the apostle speaks of such knowledge, whereby Christians are enabled to understand things in divinity which are more abstruse and difficult to be understood, and which require great skill in things of this nature. This is more fully expressed in the two next verses: "For every one that useth milk, is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." It is such knowledge, that proficiency in it shall carry persons beyond the first principles of religion. As here, "Ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God." Therefore the apostle, in the beginning of the next chapter advises them, "to leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and to go on unto perfection."

We may observe that the fault of this defect appears, in that they had not made *proficiency* according to their time.—For the time, they ought to have been teachers. As they were Christians, their business was to learn and gain Christian knowledge. They were scholars in the school of Christ; and if they had improved their time in learning as they ought to have done, they might by the time when the apostle wrote, have been fit to be teachers in this school. To whatever business any one is devoted, it may be expected that his perfection in it shall be answerable to the time he has had to learn and perfect himself.—Christians should not always remain babes, but should grow in Christian knowledge; and leaving the food of babes, they shall learn to digest strong meat.

DOCTRINE. Every Christian should make a business of endeavouring to grow in knowledge in divinity.—This is indeed esteemed the business of divines and ministers; it is commonly thought to be their work, by the study of the scriptures, and other instructive books, to gain knowledge, and most seem to think that it may be left to them, as what belongeth not to others. But if the apostle had entertained this notion, he would never have blamed the Christian Hebrews for not having acquired knowledge enough to be teachers. Or if he had thought, that this concerned Christians in general only as a thing by the bye, and that their time should not in a considerable measure be taken up with this business; he never would have so much blamed them, that their proficiency in knowledge had not been answerable to the time which they had had to learn.

In handling this subject, I shall show—what is intended by *divinity*—what kind of *knowledge* in divinity is intended—*why* knowledge in divinity is *necessary*.

And why all Christians should make a business of endeavouring to grow in this knowledge.

SECT. I.

What is intended by Divinity, as the Object of Christian Knowledge.

VARIOUS definitions have been given of this subject by those who have treated on it. I shall not now stand to inquire which, according to the rules of art, is the most accurate definition; but shall so define or describe it, as I think has the greatest tendency to convey a proper notion of it. It is that science or doctrine which comprehends all those truths and rules which concern the great business of religion.

There are various kinds of arts and sciences taught and learned in the schools, which are conversant about various objects; about the works of nature in general, as philosophy; or the visible heavens, as astronomy; of the sea, as navigation; of the earth, as geography; of the body of man, as physic and anatomy; of the soul of man, with regard to its natural powers and qualities, as logic and pneumatology; or about human government, as politics and jurisprudence. But one science or kind of knowledge and doctrine, is above all the rest; as it treats concerning God and the great business of religion. *Divinity* is not learned, as other sciences, merely by the improvement of man's natural reason, but is taught by God himself

in a book full of instruction, which he hath given us for that end. This is the rule which God hath given to the world to be their guide in searching after this kind of knowledge, and is a summary of all things of this nature needful for us to know. Upon this account divinity is rather called a doctrine, than an art or science.

Indeed there is what is called *natural religion*. There are many truths concerning God, and our duty to him, which are evident by the light of nature. But *Christian divinity*, properly so called, is not evident by the light of nature; it depends on revelation. Such are our circumstances now in our fallen state, that nothing which it is needful for us to know concerning God, is manifest by the light of nature, in the manner in which it is necessary for us to know it. For the knowledge of no truth in divinity is of significance to us, any otherwise than as it some way or other belongs to the gospel scheme, or as it relates to a Mediator. But the light of nature teaches us no truth in this matter, therefore it cannot be said, that we come to the knowledge of any part of Christian truth by the light of nature. It is only the word of God, contained in the Old and New Testament, which teaches us Christian divinity.

This comprehends all that is taught in the scriptures, and so all that we need know, or is to be known, concerning God and Jesus Christ, concerning our duty to God, and our happiness in God. Divinity is commonly defined, *the doctrine of living to God:* and by some who seem to be more accurate, *the doctrine of living to God by Christ*. It comprehends all Christian doctrines as they are in Jesus, and all Christian rules directing us in living to God by Christ. There is no one doctrine, no promise, no rule, but what some way or other relates to the Christian and divine life, or our living to God by Christ. They all relate to this, in two respects, *viz.* as they tend to promote our living to God here in this world, in a life of faith and holiness, and also as they tend to bring us to a life of perfect holiness and happiness, in the full enjoyment of God hereafter.

SECT. II.

What Kind of Knowledge in Divinity is intended in the Doctrine.

There are two kinds of knowledge of divine truth, *viz. speculative* and *practical*, or in other terms, *natural* and *spiritual*. The former remains only in the head. No other

faculty but the understanding is concerned in it. It consists of having a natural or rational knowledge of the things of religion, or such a knowledge as is to be obtained by the natural exercise of our own faculties, without any special illumination of the Spirit of God. The latter rests not entirely in the head, or in the speculative ideas of things, but the heart is concerned in it: it principally consists in the sense of the heart. The mere intellect, without the will or the inclination, is not the seat of it. And it may not only be called seeing, but feeling or tasting. Thus there is a difference between having a right speculative notion of the doctrines contained in the word of God, and having a due sense of them in the heart. In the former consists the speculative or natural knowledge; in the latter, consists the spiritual or practical knowledge of them.

Neither of these is intended in the doctrine exclusively of the other: but it is intended that we should seek the former *in order* to the latter. The latter, or the spiritual and practical, is of the greatest importance; for a speculative, without a spiritual knowledge, is to no purpose, but to make our condemnation the greater. Yet a speculative knowledge is, also, of infinite importance in this respect, that without it we can have no spiritual or practical knowledge.

I have already shown, that the apostle speaks not only of a spiritual knowledge, but of such as can be acquired, and communicated from one to another. Yet it is not to be thought, that he means this exclusively of the other. But he would have the Christian Hebrews seek the one, in order to the other. Therefore, the former is first and most *directly* intended; it is intended, that Christians should, by reading, and other proper means, seek a good *rational knowledge* of the things of divinity: while the latter is more *indirectly* intended, since it is to be sought by the other. But I proceed to

SECT. III.

The Usefulness and Necessity of the Knowledge of Divine Truths.

THERE is no other way by which any means of grace whatsoever can be of any benefit, but by knowledge. All teaching is in vain, without learning. Therefore, the preaching of the gospel would be wholly to no purpose, if it conveyed no knowledge to the mind. There is an order of men which Christ has appointed, on purpose to be teachers in his church; but they teach in vain, if no knowledge in these things is gained by their teaching. It is impossible that their teaching

and preaching should be a mean of grace, or of any good in the hearts of their hearers, any otherwise than by knowledge imparted to the understanding. Otherwise it would be of as much benefit to the auditory, if the minister should preach in some unknown tongue. All the difference is, that preaching in a known tongue, conveys something to the understanding, which preaching, in an unknown tongue, does not. On this account, such preaching must be unprofitable. In such things, men receive nothing, when they understand nothing; and are not at all edified, unless some knowledge be conveyed; agreeable to the apostle's arguing. 1 Cor. xiv. 2—6.

No speech can be a mean of grace, but by conveying knowledge. Otherwise the speech is as much lost as if there had been no man there, and if he that spoke, had spoken only into the air; as it follows in the passage just quoted, ver 6—10. God deals with man as with a rational creature; and when faith is in exercise, it is not about something he knows not what. Therefore, hearing is absolutely necessary to faith; because hearing is necessary to understanding. Rom. x. 14. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" In like manner, there can be no love without knowledge. It is not according to the nature of the human soul, to love an object which is entirely unknown. The heart cannot be set upon an object of which there is no idea in the understanding. The reasons which induce the soul to love, must first be understood, before they can have a reasonable influence on the heart.

God hath given us the Bible, which is a book of instructions. But this book can be of no manner of profit to us, any otherwise than as it conveys some knowledge to the mind: it can profit us no more than if it were written in the Chinese or Tartarian language, of which we know not one word. So the sacraments of the gospel can have a proper effect no other way, than by conveying some knowledge. They represent certain things by visible signs. And what is the end of signs, but to convey some knowledge of the things signified? Such is the nature of man, that no object can come at the heart but through the door of the understanding: and there can be no spiritual knowledge of that of which there is not first a rational knowledge. It is impossible that any one should see the truth or excellency of any doctrine of the gospel, who knows not what that doctrine is. A man cannot see the wonderful excellency and love of Christ, in doing such and such things for sinners, unless his understanding be first informed how those things were done. He cannot have a taste of the sweetness and excellency of divine truth, unless he first have a notion that there is such a thing.

Without knowledge in divinity, none would differ from

the most ignorant and barbarous Heathens. The Heathens remain in gross darkness, because they are not instructed, and have not obtained the knowledge of divine truths.

If men have no knowledge of these things, the faculty of reason in them will be wholly in vain. The faculty of reason and understanding was given for *actual* understanding and knowledge. If a man have no actual knowledge, the faculty or capacity of knowing is of no use to him. And if he have actual knowledge, yet if he be destitute of the knowledge of those things which are the last end of his being, and for the sake of the knowledge of which he had more understanding given him than the beasts; then still his faculty of reason is in vain; he might as well have been a beast as a man. But divine subjects are the things, to know which we had the faculty of reason given us. They are the things which appertain to the end of our being, and to the great business for which we are made. Therefore a man cannot have his faculty of understanding to any good purpose, further than he hath knowledge of divine truth.

So that this kind of knowledge is absolutely necessary.—Other kinds of knowledge may be very useful. Some other sciences, such as astronomy, natural philosophy, and geography, may be very excellent in their kind. But the knowledge of this divine science is infinitely more useful and important than that of all other sciences whatever.

SECT. IV.

Why all Christians should make a Business of endeavouring to grow in the Knowledge of Divinity.

CHRISTIANS ought not to content themselves with such degrees of knowledge of divinity as they have already obtained. It should not satisfy them, as they know as much as is absolutely necessary to salvation, but they should seek to make progress.

This endeavour to make progress in such knowledge ought not to be attended to as a thing by the bye, but all Christians should make a *business* of it. They should look upon it as a part of their *daily* business, and no small part of it neither. It should be attended to as a considerable part of the work of their high calling.—For,

1. Our business should doubtless much consist in employing those faculties, by which we are distinguished from the beasts, about those things which are the main end of those faculties. The reason why we have faculties superior to those of the brutes given us, is, that we are indeed designed for a superior employment. That which the Creator intended

should be our main employment, is something above what he intended the beast for, and therefore hath given us superior powers. Therefore, without doubt, it should be a considerable part of our business to improve those superior faculties. But the faculty by which we are chiefly distinguished from the brutes, is the faculty of understanding. It follows then, that we should make it our chief business to improve this faculty, and should by no means prosecute it as a business by the bye. For us to make the improvement of this faculty a business by the bye, is in effect for us to make the faculty of understanding itself a *by faculty*, if I may so speak, a faculty of less importance than others: whereas indeed it is the highest faculty we have.

But we cannot make a business of the improvement of our intellectual faculty, any otherwise than by making a business of improving ourselves in actual knowledge. So that those who make not this very much their business; but instead of improving their understanding to acquire knowledge, are chiefly devoted to their inferior power—to please their senses, and gratify their animal appetites—not only behave themselves in a manner not becoming Christians, but also act as if they had forgotten that they are men, and that God hath set them above the brutes, by giving them understanding.

God hath given to man some things in common with the brutes, as his outward senses, his bodily appetites, a capacity of bodily pleasure and pain, and other animal faculties: and some things he hath given him superior to the brutes, the chief of which is a faculty of understanding and reason. Now God never gave man these faculties to be subject to those which he hath in common with the brutes. This would be great confusion, and equivalent to making man to be a servant to the beasts. On the contrary, he has given those inferior powers to be employed in subserviency to man's understanding; and therefore it must be a great part of man's principal business to improve his understanding by acquiring knowledge. If so, then it will follow, that it should be a main part of his business to improve his understanding in acquiring *divine* knowledge, or the knowledge of the things of divinity: for the knowledge of these things is the principal end of this faculty. God gave man the faculty of understanding, chiefly, that he might understand divine things.

The wiser Heathens were sensible that the main business of man was the improvement and exercise of his understanding. But they knew not the object about which the understanding should chiefly be employed. That science which many of them thought should chiefly employ the understanding, was philosophy; and accordingly they made it their chief business

to study it. But we who enjoy the light of the gospel are more happy; we are not left, as to this particular, in the dark. God hath told us about what things we should chiefly employ our understandings, having given us a book full of divine instructions, holding forth many glorious objects about which all rational creatures should chiefly employ their understandings. These instructions are accommodated to persons of all capacities and conditions; and proper to be studied, not only by men of learning, but by persons of every character, learned and unlearned, young and old, men and women. Therefore the acquisition of knowledge in these things should be a main business of all those who have the advantage of enjoying the Holy Scriptures.

2. The truths of divinity are of superlative excellency, and are worthy that all should make a business of endeavouring to grow in the knowledge of them. They are as much above those things which are treated of in other sciences, as heaven is above the earth. God himself, the eternal Three in One, is the chief object of this science; and next Jesus Christ, as God-man and Mediator, and the glorious work of redemption, the most glorious work that ever was wrought: then the great things of the heavenly world, the glorious and eternal inheritance purchased by Christ, and promised in the gospel; the work of the Holy Spirit of God on the hearts of men; our duty to God, and the way in which we ourselves may become like angels, and like God himself in our measure. All these are objects of this science.

Such things as these have been the main subject of the study of the holy patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and the most excellent men that ever existed; and they are also the subjects of study to the angels in heaven; 1 Pet. i. 10—12.—They are so excellent and worthy to be known, that the knowledge of them will richly pay for all the pains and labour of an earnest seeking of it. If there were a great treasure of gold and pearls accidentally found, and opened with such circumstances that all might have as much as they could gather; would not every one think it worth his while to make a business of gathering while it should last? But that treasure of divine knowledge, which is contained in the Scriptures, and is provided for every one to gather to himself as much of it as he can, is far more rich than any one of gold and pearls. How busy are all sorts of men, all over the world, in getting riches? But this knowledge is a far better kind of riches, than that after which they so diligently and laboriously pursue.

3. Divine truths not only concern ministers, but are of infinite importance to all Christians. It is not with the doctrines of divinity as it is with the doctrines of philosophy and other sciences. These last are generally speculative points, which are of little concern in human life; and it very little alters the

case as to our temporal or spiritual interests, whether we know them or not. Philosophers differ about them, some being of one opinion, and others of another. And while they are engaged in warm disputes about them, others may well leave them to dispute among themselves, without troubling their heads much about them; it being of little concern to them whether the one or the other be in the right.—But it is not thus in matters of divinity. The doctrines of this nearly concern every one. They are about those things which relate to every man's eternal salvation and happiness. The common people cannot say, Let us leave these matters to ministers and divines; let them dispute them out among themselves as they can; they concern not us: For they are of infinite importance to every man. Those doctrines which relate to the essence, attributes, and subsistences of God, concern all; as it is of infinite importance to common people, as well as to ministers, to know what kind of being God is. For he is the Being who hath made us all, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being; who is the Lord of all; the Being to whom we are all accountable; is the last end of our being, and the only fountain of our happiness.

The doctrines also which relate to Jesus Christ, and his mediation, his incarnation, his life and death, his resurrection and ascension, his sitting at the right hand of the Father, his satisfaction and intercession, infinitely concern common people as well as divines. They stand in as much need of this Saviour, and of an interest in his person and offices, and the things which he hath done and suffered, as ministers and divines.—The same may be said of the doctrines which relate to the manner of a sinner's justification, or the way in which he becomes interested in the mediation of Christ. They equally concern all; for all stand in equal necessity of justification before God. That eternal condemnation, to which we are all naturally exposed, is equally dreadful. So with respect to those doctrines which relate to the work of the Spirit of God on the heart, in the application of redemption in our effectual calling and sanctification, all are equally concerned in them. There is no doctrine of divinity whatever, which doth not some way or other concern the eternal interest of every Christian.

4. We may argue in favour of the same position, from the great things which God hath done in order to give us instruction in these things. As to other sciences, he hath left us to ourselves, to the light of our own reason. But divine things being of infinitely greater importance to us, he hath not left us to an uncertain guide; but he hath himself given us a revelation of the truth in these matters, and hath done very great things to convey and confirm it to us; raising up many prophets in different ages, immediately inspiring them with his Holy Spirit, and confirming their doctrine with innumerable miracles or wonder-

ful works out of the established course of nature. Yea, he raised up a succession of prophets, which was upheld for several ages.

It was very much for this end that God separated the people of Israel, in so wonderful a manner, from all other people, and kept them separate; that to them he might commit the oracles of God, and that from them they might be communicated to the world. He hath also often sent angels to bring divine instructions to men; and hath often himself appeared in miraculous symbols or representations of his presence; and now in these last days hath sent his own Son into the world, to be his great prophet, to teach us divine truth, Heb. i. 1, &c. God hath given us a book of divine instructions, which contains the sum of divinity. Now, these things hath God done, not only for the instruction of ministers and men of learning; but for the instruction of all men, of all sorts, learned and unlearned men, women, and children. And certainly if God doth such great things to *teach* us, we ought to do something to *learn*.

God giving instructions to men in these things, is not a business by the bye; but what he hath undertaken and prosecuted in a course of great and wonderful dispensations, as an affair in which his heart hath been greatly engaged: which is sometimes in Scripture signified by the expression of God's rising early to teach us, and to send us prophets and teachers. Jer. vii. 25. "Since that day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt, unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early, and sending them." And ver. 13. "I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking." This is a figurative speech, signifying that God hath done this as a business of great importance, in which he took great care, and had his heart much engaged; because persons are wont to rise early to prosecute such business as they are earnestly engaged in.—If God hath been so engaged in teaching, certainly we should not be negligent in learning; but should make growing in knowledge a great part of the business of our lives.

5. It may be argued from the abundance of the instructions which God hath given us, from the largeness of that book which God hath given to teach us divinity, and from the great variety that is therein contained. Much was taught by Moses of old, which we have transmitted down to us; after that, other books were from time to time added; much is taught us by David and Solomon; and many and excellent are the instructions communicated by the prophets; yet God did not think all this enough, but after this sent Christ and his apostles, by whom there is added a great and excellent treasure to that holy book, which is to be our rule in the study of this important subject.

This book was written for the use of all; all are directed to search the scriptures, John v. 39. "Search the scriptures, for

in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they that testify of me;" and Isa. xxxiv. 16. "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read." They that read and understand are pronounced blessed, Rev. i. 3. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that understand the words of this prophecy." If this be true of that particular book of the *Revelation*, much more is it true of the Bible in general. Nor is it to be believed that God would have given instructions in such abundance, if he had intended that receiving instruction should be only a bye concern with us.

It is to be considered, that all those abundant instructions which are contained in the scriptures were written that they might be understood; otherwise they are not instructions. That which is not given that the learner may understand it, is not given for the learner's instruction; and unless we endeavour to grow in the knowledge of divinity, a very great part of those instructions will to us be in vain; for we can receive benefit by no more of the scriptures than we understand. We have reason to bless God that he hath given us such various and plentiful instruction in his word; but we shall be hypocritical in so doing, if we, after all, content ourselves with but little of this instruction.

When God hath opened a very large treasure before us, for the supply of our wants, and we thank him that he hath given us so much; if at the same time we be willing to remain destitute of the greatest part of it, because we are too lazy to gather it, this will not show the sincerity of our thankfulness. We are now under much greater advantages to acquire knowledge in divinity, than the people of God were of old; because since that time, the canon of scripture is much increased. But if we be negligent of our advantages, we may be never the better for them, and may remain with as little knowledge as they.

6. However diligently we apply ourselves, there is room enough to increase our knowledge in divine truth. None have this excuse to make for not diligently applying themselves to gain knowledge in divinity, that they already know all; nor can they make this excuse, that they have no need diligently to apply themselves, in order to know all that is to be known. None can excuse themselves for want of business in which to employ themselves. There is room enough to employ ourselves for ever in this divine science, with the utmost application. Those who have applied themselves most closely, have studied the longest, and have made the greatest attainments in this knowledge, know but little of what is to be known. The subject is inexhaustible. That Divine Being, who is the main subject of this science, is infinite, and there is no end to the glory of his perfections. His works at the same time are wonderful, and cannot be found out to perfection; especially the work of re-

demption, about which the science of divinity is chiefly conversant, is full of unsearchable wonders.

The word of God, which is given for our instruction in divinity, contains enough in it to employ us to the end of our lives, and then we shall leave enough uninvestigated to employ the heads of the ablest divines to the end of the world. The Psalmist found an end to the things that are human; but he could never find an end to what is contained in the word of God: Psal. cxix. 96. "I have seen an end to all perfection; but thy command is exceeding broad." There is enough in this divine science to employ the understandings of saints and angels to all eternity.

7. It doubtless concerns every one to endeavour to excel in the knowledge of things which pertain to his profession, or principal calling. If it concerns men to excel in any thing, or in any wisdom or knowledge at all, it certainly concerns them to excel in the affairs of their main profession and work. But the calling and work of every Christian is to live to God. This is said to be his *high calling*, Phil. iii. 14. This is the business, and, if I may so speak, the *trade* of a Christian, his main work, and, indeed, should be his only work. No business should be done by a Christian, but as it is some way or other a part of this. Therefore, certainly, the Christian should endeavour to be well acquainted with those things which belong to this work, that he may fulfil it, and be thoroughly furnished to it.

It becomes one, who is called to be a soldier, to excel in the art of war. It becomes a mariner to excel in the art of navigation. It becomes a physician to excel in the knowledge of those things which pertain to the art of physic. So it becomes all such as profess to be Christians, and to devote themselves to the practice of Christianity, to endeavour to excel in the knowledge of divinity.

8. It may be argued hence, that God hath appointed an order of men for this end, to assist persons in gaining knowledge in these things. He hath appointed them to be teachers, 1 Cor. xii. 28; and God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers: Eph. iv. 11, 12. "He gave some, apostles; some, prophets; some, evangelists; some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." If God hath set them to be teachers, making that their business, then he hath made it their business to impart knowledge. But what kind of knowledge? not the knowledge of philosophy, or of human laws, or of mechanical arts, but of divinity.

If God have made it the business of some to be teachers, it will follow, that he hath made it the business of others to be learners; for teachers and learners are correlates, one of which

was never intended to be without the other. God hath never made it the duty of some to take pains to teach those who are not obliged to take pains to learn. He hath not commanded ministers to spend themselves, in order to impart knowledge to those who are not obliged to apply themselves to receive it.

The name by which Christians are commonly called in the New Testament, is *disciples;* the signification of which word, is *scholars* or *learners*. All Christians are put into the school of Christ, where their business is to learn, or receive knowledge from Christ, their common master and teacher, and from those inferior teachers appointed by him to instruct in his name.

9. God hath in the scriptures plainly revealed it to be his will, that all Christians should diligently endeavour to excel in the knowledge of divine things. It is the revealed will of God, that Christians should not only have some knowledge of things of this nature, but that they should be *enriched with all knowledge:* 1 Cor. i. 4, 5. "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God that is given you by Jesus Christ, that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in *all knowledge*." So the apostle earnestly prayed, that the Christian Philippians might abound more and more, not only in love, but in Christian *knowledge;* Phil. i. 9. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in *knowledge*, and in *all judgment*." So the apostle Peter advises to "give all diligence to add to faith virtue, and to virtue *knowledge*," 2 Pet. i. 5; and the apostle Paul, in the next chapter to that wherein is the text, counsels the Christian Hebrews' leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, to go on to perfection. He would by no means have them always to rest only in those fundamental doctrines of repentance, and faith, and the resurrection from the dead, and the eternal judgment, in which they were instructed when baptized, at their first initiation in Christianity. (See Heb. vi. &c.)

SECT. V.

An Exhortation that all may diligently endeavour to gain Christian Knowledge.

Consider yourselves as scholars or disciples, put into the school of Christ; and, therefore, be diligent to make proficiency in Christian knowledge. Content not yourselves with this, that you have been taught your catechism in your childhood, and that you know as much of the principles of religion as is necessary to salvation; else you will be guilty of what the apostle warns against, *viz.* going no further than laying the foundation of repentance from dead works, &c.

You are all called to be Christians, and this is your profession. Endeavour, therefore, to acquire knowledge in things which pertain to your profession. Let not your teachers have cause to complain, that while they spend and are spent, to impart knowledge to you, you take little pains to learn. It is a great encouragement to an instructer, to have such to teach as make a business of learning, bending their minds to it. This makes teaching a pleasure, when, otherwise, it will be a very heavy and burdensome task.

You all have by you a large treasure of divine knowledge, in that you have the Bible in your hands; therefore, be not contented in possessing but little of this treasure. God hath spoken much to you in the Scriptures; labour to understand as much of what he saith as you can. God hath made you all reasonable creatures; therefore, let not the noble faculty of reason or understanding lie neglected. Content not yourselves with having so much knowledge as is thrown in your way, and received in some sense unavoidably by the frequent inculcation of divine truth in the preaching of the word, of which you are obliged to be hearers, or accidentally gain in conversation; but let it be very much your business to search for it, and that with the same diligence and labour with which men are wont to dig in mines of silver and gold.

Especially I would advise those who are young to employ themselves in this way. Men are never too old to learn; but the time of youth is especially the time for learning; it is peculiarly proper for gaining and storing up knowledge. Further, to stir up all, both old and young, to this duty, let me entreat you to consider,

1. If you apply yourselves diligently to this work, you will not want employment, when you are at leisure from your common secular business. In this way, you may find something in which you may profitably employ yourselves. You will find something else to do, besides going about from house to house, spending one hour after another in unprofitable conversation, or, at best, to no other purpose but to amuse yourselves, to fill up and wear away your time. And it is to be feared, that very much of the time spent in evening visits, is spent to a much worse purpose than that which I have now mentioned. Solomon tells us, Prov. x. 19, "That in the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin." And is not this verified in those who find little else to do but to go to one another's houses, and spend the time in such talk as comes next, or such as any one's present disposition happens to suggest?

Some diversion is, doubtless, lawful; but for Christians to spend so much of their time, so many long evenings, in no other conversation than that which tends to divert and amuse, if no-

thing worse, is a sinful way of spending time, and tends to poverty of soul at least, if not to outward poverty: Prov. xiv. 23. "In all labour, there is profit; but the talk of the lips tendeth only to *penury*." Besides, when persons for so much of their time have nothing else to do, but to sit, and talk, and chat, there is great danger of falling into foolish and sinful conversation, venting their corrupt dispositions, in talking against others, expressing their jealousies, and evil surmises concerning their neighbours; not considering what Christ hath said, Matt. xii. 36. "Of every idle word that men shall speak, shall they give account in the day of judgment."

If you would comply with what you have heard from this doctrine, you would find something else to employ your time besides contention, or talking about those public affairs which tend to contention. Young people might find something else to do, besides spending their time in vain company; something that would be much more profitable to themselves, as it would really turn to some good account; something, in doing which, they would both be more out of the way of temptation, and be more in the way of duty, and of a divine blessing. And even aged people would have something to employ themselves in, after they are become incapable of bodily labour. Their time, as is now often the case, would not lie heavy upon their hands, as they would with both profit and pleasure be engaged in searching the scriptures, and in comparing and meditating upon the various truths which they should find there.

2. This would be a *noble* way of spending your time.—The Holy Spirit gives the Bereans this epithet, because they diligently employed themselves in this business: Acts xvii. 11. "These were more *noble* than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Similar to this, is very much the employment of heaven. The inhabitants of that world spend much of their time in searching into the great things of divinity, and endeavouring to acquire knowledge in them, as we are told of the angels, 1 Pet. i. 12. "Which things the angels desire to look into." This will be very agreeable to what you hope will be your business to all eternity, as you doubtless hope to join in the same employment with the angels of light. Solomon says, Prov. xxv. 2, "it is the honour of kings to search out a matter;" and certainly, above all others, to search out divine matters. Now, if this be the honour even of kings, is it not equally, if not much more your honour?

3. This is a *pleasant* way of improving time. Knowledge is pleasant and delightful to intelligent creatures, and above all the knowledge of divine things; for in them are the most

excellent truths, and the most beautiful and amiable objects held forth to view. However tedious the labour necessarily attending this business may be, yet the knowledge once obtained will richly requite the pains taken to obtain it. "When wisdom entereth the heart, knowledge is pleasant to the soul;" Prov. ii. 10.

4. This knowledge is exceeding *useful* in Christian practice. Such as have much knowledge in divinity have great means and advantages for spiritual and saving knowledge; for no means of grace have a saving effect, otherwise than by the knowledge they impart. The more you have of a rational knowledge of divine things, the more opportunity will there be, when the Spirit shall be breathed into your heart, to see the excellency of these things, and to taste the sweetness of them. The Heathens, who have no rational knowledge of the things of the gospel, have no opportunity to see the excellency of them; and therefore the more rational knowledge of these things you have, the more opportunity and advantage you have to see the divine excellency and glory of them.

Again, The more knowledge you have of divine things, the better will you know your duty; your knowledge will be of great use to direct you as to your duty in particular cases. You will also be the better furnished against the temptations of the devil. For the devil also takes advantage of persons' ignorance to ply them with temptations, which otherwise would have no hold of them. By having much knowledge, you will be under greater advantages to conduct yourselves with prudence and discretion in your Christian course, and so to live much more to the honour of God and religion. Many who mean well, and are full of a good spirit, yet for want of prudence, conduct themselves so as to wound religion. Many have a zeal of God, which does more hurt than good, because it is not according to knowledge, Rom. x. 2. The reason why many good men behave no better in many instances, is not so much that they want grace, as that they want knowledge. Beside, an increase of knowledge would be a great help to profitable conversation. It would supply you with matter for conversation when you come together, or when you visit your neighbours; and so you would have less temptation to spend the time in such conversation as tends to your own and others' hurt.

5. Consider the advantages you are under to grow in the knowledge of divinity. We are under far greater advantages to gain much of this knowledge now, than God's people under the Old Testament, both because the canon of scripture is so much enlarged since that time, and also, because evangelical truths are now so much more plainly revealed. So that common men are now in some respects under advantages to know more, than the greatest prophets were then. Thus that saying

of Christ is in a sense applicable to us, Luke x. 23, 24. "Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." We are in some respects under far greater advantages for gaining knowledge, now in these latter ages of the church, than Christians were formerly; especially by reason of the art of printing; of which God hath given us the benefit, whereby Bibles and other books of divinity are exceedingly multiplied, and persons may now be furnished with helps for the obtaining of Christian knowledge, at a much easier and cheaper rate than they formerly could.

6. We know not what opposition we may meet with in the religious principles which we hold. We know that there are many adversaries to the gospel and its truths. If therefore we embrace those truths, we must expect to be attacked by the said adversaries; and unless we be well informed concerning divine things, how shall we be able to defend ourselves? Beside, the apostle Peter enjoins it upon us, always to be ready to give an answer to every man who asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us. But this we cannot expect to do without considerable knowledge in divine things.

SECT. VI.

Directions for the Acquisition of Christian Knowledge.

1. Be assiduous in reading the holy scriptures. This is the fountain whence all knowledge in divinity must be derived. Therefore let not this treasure lie by you neglected. Every man of common understanding who can read, may, if he please, become well acquainted with the scriptures. And what an excellent attainment would this be!

2. Content not yourselves with only a cursory reading, without regarding the sense. This is an ill way of reading, to which, however, many accustom themselves all their days. When you read, observe what you read. Observe how things come in. Take notice of the drift of the discourse, and compare one scripture with another. For the scripture, by the harmony of its different parts, casts great light upon itself.—We are expressly directed by Christ, to *search* the scriptures, which evidently intends something more than a mere cursory reading. And use means to find out the meaning of the scripture. When you have it explained in the preaching of the word, take notice of it; and if at any time a scripture that you did not understand be cleared up to your satisfaction, mark it, lay it up, and if possible remember it.

3. Procure, and diligently use other books which may help you to grow in this knowledge. There are many excellent books extant, which might greatly forward you in this knowledge, and afford you a very profitable and pleasant entertainment in your leisure hours. There is doubtless a great defect in many, that through a lothness to be at a little expense, they furnish themselves with no more helps of this nature. They have a few books indeed, which now and then on Sabbath days they read; but they have had them so long, and read them so often, that they are weary of them, and it is now become a dull story, a mere task to read them.

4. Improve conversation with others to this end. How much might persons promote each other's knowledge in divine things, if they would improve conversation as they might; if men that are ignorant were no ashamed to show their ignorance, and were willing to learn of others; if those that have knowledge would communicate it, without pride and ostentation; and if all were more disposed to enter on such conversation as would be for their mutual edification and instruction.

5. Seek not to grow in knowledge chiefly for the sake of applause, and to enable you to dispute with others; but seek it for the benefit of your souls, and in order to practice.—If applause be your end, you will not be so likely to be led to the knowledge of the truth, but may justly, as often is the case of those who are proud of their knowledge, be led into error to your own perdition. This being your end, if you should obtain much rational knowledge, it would not be likely to be of any benefit to you, but would puff you up with pride: 1 Cor. viii. 1. "Knowledge puffeth up."

6. Seek to God, that he would direct you, and bless you, in this pursuit after knowledge. This is the apostle's direction, James i. 5. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." God is the fountain of all divine knowledge: Prov. ii. 6. "The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." Labour to be sensible of your own blindness and ignorance, and your need of the help of God, lest you be led into error, instead of true knowledge: 1 Cor. iii. 18. "If any man would be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise."

7. Practise according to what knowledge you have. This will be the way to know more. The Psalmist warmly recommends this way of seeking knowledge in divine truth, from his own experience: Psal. cxix. 100. "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts." Christ also recommends the same: John vii. 17. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

SERMON II.*

GOD THE BEST PORTION OF THE CHRISTIAN.

PSALM LXXIII. 25.

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.

IN this psalm, the psalmist (Asaph,) relates the great difficulty which existed in his own mind, from the consideration of the wicked. He observes, (ver. 2, 3.) "As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipt. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." In the 4th and following verses, he informs us, what in the wicked was his temptation. In the first place, he observed, that they were *prosperous*, and all things went well with them. He then observed their *behaviour* in their prosperity, and the use which they made of it; and that God, notwithstanding such abuse, *continued* their prosperity. Then he tells us by what means he was helped out of this difficulty, *viz.* by going into the *sanctuary*, verses 16, 17; and proceeds to inform us what considerations they were which helped him, *viz.* (1.) The consideration of the *miserable end* of wicked men. However they prosper for the present, yet they come to a woful end at last, verses 18—20. (2.) The consideration of the *blessed end* of the saints. Although the saints, while they live, may be afflicted, yet they come to a happy end at last, verses 21—24. (3.) The consideration, that the godly have a much *better portion* than the wicked, even though they have no other portion but God; as in the text and following verse. Though the wicked are in prosperity, and are not in trouble as other men; yet the godly, though in affliction, are in a

* Dated April, 1736.

state infinitely better, because they have God for their portion. They need desire nothing else; he that hath God, hath all. Thus the psalmist professes the sense and apprehension which he had of things: *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*

In the verse immediately preceding, the psalmist takes notice how the saints are happy in God, both when they are in this world, and also when they are taken to another. They are blessed in God in this world, in that he *guides them by his counsel;* and when he takes them out of it, they are still happy, in that then he *receives them to glory.* This probably led him in the text to declare that he desired *no other portion,* either in this world or in that to come, either in heaven or upon earth.—Whence we learn, *That it is the spirit of a truly godly man, to prefer God before all other things, either in heaven or on earth.*

I. A godly man prefers God before any thing else *in heaven.*

1. He prefers God before any thing else that *actually is* in heaven. Every godly man hath his heart in heaven; his affections are mainly set on what is to be had there. Heaven is his chosen country and inheritance. He hath respect to heaven, as a traveller, who is in a distant land, hath to his own country. The traveller can content himself to be in a strange land for a while, but his own native land is preferred by him to all others: Heb. xi. 13, &c. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned: But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly."—The respect which a godly person hath to heaven may be compared to the respect which a child, when he is abroad, hath to his father's house. He can be contented abroad for a little while; but the place to which he desires to return, and in which to dwell, is his own home. Heaven is the true saint's Father's house: John xiv. 2. "In my Father's house are many mansions." John xx. 17. "I ascend to my Father and your Father."

Now the main reason why the godly man hath his heart thus to heaven, is because God is there; that is the palace of the Most High. It is the place where God is gloriously present, where his love is gloriously manifested, where the godly may be with him, see him as he is, and love, serve, praise, and enjoy him perfectly. If God and Christ were not in heaven, he would not be so earnest in seeking it, nor would he take so much pains in a laborious travel through this wilderness, nor would the

consideration that he is going to heaven when he dies, be such a comfort to him under toils and afflictions. The martyrs would not undergo cruel sufferings from their persecutors, with a cheerful prospect of going to heaven, did they not expect to be with Christ, and to enjoy God there. They would not with that cheerfulness forsake all their earthly possessions, and all their earthly friends, as many thousands of them have done, and wander about in poverty and banishment, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, in hopes of exchanging their earthly for a heavenly inheritance, were it not that they hope to be with their glorious Redeemer and heavenly Father. The believer's heart is in heaven, because his treasure is there.

2. A godly man prefers God before any thing else that *might be* in heaven. Not only is there nothing *actually* in heaven, which is in his esteem equal with God; but neither is there any thing of which he can conceive as *possible to be there*, which by him is esteemed and desired equally with God. Some suppose quite different enjoyments to be in heaven, from those which the scriptures teach us. The Mahometans, for instance, suppose, that in heaven are to be enjoyed all manner of sensual delights and pleasures. Many things which Mahomet has feigned, are, to the lusts and carnal appetites of men the most agreeable that he could devise, and with them he flattered his followers. But the true saint could not contrive one more agreeable to his inclination and desires, than such as is revealed in the word of God; a heaven of enjoying the glorious God, and the Lord Jesus Christ. There he shall have all sin taken away, and shall be perfectly conformed to God, and shall spend an eternity in exalted exercises of love to him, and in the enjoyment of his love. If God were not to be enjoyed in heaven, but only vast wealth, immense treasures of silver and gold, great honour of such kind as men obtain in this world, and a fulness of the greatest sensual delights and pleasures; all these things would not make up for the want of God and Christ, and the enjoyment of them there. If it were empty of God, it would indeed be an empty melancholy place.—The godly have been made sensible, as to all creature-enjoyments, that they cannot satisfy the soul; and, therefore, nothing will content them but God. Offer a saint what you will, if you deny him God, he will esteem himself miserable. God is the centre of his desires; and, as long as you keep his soul from its proper centre, it will not be at rest.

II. It is the temper of a godly man to prefer God before all other things *on the earth*.

1. The saint prefers that enjoyment of God, for which he *hopes* hereafter, to any thing in this world. He looketh not so much at the things which are seen, and temporal, as at those

which are unseen and eternal, 1 Cor. iv. 18. It is but a little of God that the saint enjoys in this world; he hath but a little acquaintance with God, and enjoys but a little of the manifestations of the divine glory and love. But God hath promised to give him himself hereafter in a full enjoyment. And these promises are more precious to the saint, than the most precious earthly jewels. The gospel contains greater treasures, in his esteem, than the cabinets of princes, or the mines of the Indies.

2. The saints prefer what of God may be *obtained* in this life before all things in the world. There is a great difference in the present spiritual attainments of the saints. Some attain to much greater acquaintance and communion with God, and conformity to him, than others. But the highest attainments are very small in comparison with what is future. The saints are capable of making progress in spiritual attainments, and they earnestly desire such further attainments. Not contented with those degrees to which they have already attained, they hunger and thirst after righteousness, and, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. It is their desire to know more of God, to have more of his image, and to be enabled more to imitate God and Christ in their walk and conversation. Psalm xxvii. 4. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Psalm xlii. 1, 2. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" Psalm lxiii. 1, 2. "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." See, also, Psalm lxxxiv. 1, 2, 3, and Psalm cxxx. "My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning."

Though every saint has not this longing desire after God to the same degree that the Psalmist had, yet they are all of the same spirit; they earnestly desire to have more of his presence in their hearts. That this is the temper of the godly, in general, and not of some particular saints only, appears from Isaiah xxvi. 8, 9; where, not any particular saint, but the church, in general, speaks thus: "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit within me will I seek thee early." See, also, Cant. iii. 1, 2. v. 6, 8.

The saints are not always in the lively exercise of grace; but such a spirit they have, and sometimes they have the sensible exercise of it. They desire God and divine attainments, more than all earthly things; and seek to be rich in grace, more than they do to get earthly riches. They desire the honour which is of God, more than that which is of men. (John v. 44,) and communion with him, more than any earthly pleasures. They are of the same spirit which the apostle expresses, Phil. iii. 8. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord; and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

3. The saint prefers *what he hath already of God* before any thing in this world. That which was infused into his heart at his conversion, is more precious to him than any thing which the world can afford. The views which are sometimes given him of the beauty and excellency of God, are more precious to him than all the treasures of the wicked. The relation of a child in which he stands to God, the union which there is between his soul and Jesus Christ, he values more than the greatest earthly dignity. That image of God which is instamped on his soul, he values more than any earthly ornaments. It is, in his esteem, better to be adorned with the graces of God's Holy Spirit, than to be made to shine in jewels of gold, and the most costly pearls, or to be admired for the greatest external beauty. He values the robe of Christ's righteousness, which he hath on his soul, more than the robes of princes. The spiritual pleasures and delights which he sometimes has in God, he prefers far before all the pleasures of sin. Psalm lxxxiv. 10. "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

A saint thus prefers God before all other things in this world. —1. As he prefers God before any thing else that he *possesses* in the world. Whatever temporal enjoyments he has, he prefers God to them all. Psalm xvi. 5, 6. "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." If he be rich, he chiefly sets his heart on his heavenly riches. He prefers God before any earthly friend, and the divine favour before any respect shown him by his fellow-creatures. Although inadvertently these have room in his heart, and too much room; yet he reserves the throne of God; Luke xiv. 26. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

2. He prefers God before any earthly enjoyment of which he *hath a prospect*. The children of men commonly set their hearts more on some earthly happiness for which they *hope*, and

after which they are seeking, than on what they *have* in present possession. But a godly man prefers God to any thing which he has in prospect in this world. He may, indeed, through the prevalence of corruption, be for a season carried away with some enjoyment; however, he will again come to himself; this is not the temper of the man; he is of another spirit.

3. It is the spirit of a godly man to prefer God to any earthly enjoyments of which he *can conceive*. He not only prefers him to any thing which he now possesses; but he sees nothing possessed by any of his fellow-creatures, so estimable. Could he have as much worldly prosperity as he would; could he have earthly things just to his mind, and agreeable to his inclination; he values the portion which he has in God, incomparably more. He prefers Christ to earthly kingdoms.

APPLICATION.

1. Hence we may learn, that whatever changes a godly man passes through, he is happy; because God, who is unchangeable, is his chosen portion. Though he meet with temporal losses, and be deprived of many, yea, of all his temporal enjoyments; yet God whom he prefers before all, still remains, and cannot be lost. While he stays in this changeable, troublesome world, he is happy; because his chosen portion, on which he builds as his main foundation for happiness, is above the world, and above all changes. And when he goes into another world, still he is happy, because that portion yet remains. Whatever he be deprived of, he cannot be deprived of his chief portion; his inheritance remains sure to him.—Could worldly-minded men find out a way to secure to themselves those earthly enjoyments on which they mainly set their hearts, so that they could not be lost nor impaired while they live, how great would they account the privilege, though other things which they esteem in a less degree, were liable to the same uncertainty as they now are! Whereas now, those earthly enjoyments, on which men chiefly set their hearts, are often most fading. But how great is the happiness of those who have chosen the Fountain of all good, who prefer him before all things in heaven or on earth; and who can never be deprived of him to all eternity!

2. Let all by these things examine and try themselves, whether they be saints or not. As this which hath been exhibited is the spirit of the saints, so it is peculiar to them: none can use the language of the text, and say, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee*, but the saints. A man's choice is that which determines his state. He that chooses God for his portion, and prefers him to all other things, is a godly man, for *he* chooses and worships him as God. To respect him as God, is to respect him above all other things;

and if any man respect him as *his God, his God he is;* there is an union and covenant relation between that man and the true God.—Every man is as his God is. If you would know what a man is, whether he be a godly man or not, you must inquire what his God is? If the true God be he to whom he hath a supreme respect, whom he regards above all; he is doubtless a servant of the true God. But if the man have something else, to which he pays a greater respect than to Jehovah, he is not a godly man.

Inquire, therefore, how it is with you;—whether you prefer God before all other things. It may sometimes be a difficulty for persons to determine this to their satisfaction; the ungodly may be deluded with false affections: the godly in dull frames may be at a loss about it. Therefore you may try yourselves, as to this matter, several ways; if you cannot speak fully to one thing, yet you may perhaps to others.

1. What is it which *chiefly* makes you desire to go to heaven when you die? Indeed some have no great desire to go to heaven. They do not care to go to hell; but if they could be safe from that, they would not much concern themselves about heaven. If it be not so with you, but you find that you have a desire after heaven, then inquire what it is for. Is the main reason, that you may be with God, have communion with him, and be conformed to him; that you may see God and enjoy him there? Is this the consideration which keeps your hearts and your desires, and your expectations towards heaven?

2. If you could avoid death, and might have your free choice, would you choose to live *always* in this world without God, rather than in his time to leave the world, in order to be with him? If you might live here in earthly prosperity to all eternity, but destitute of the presence of God and communion with him—having no spiritual intercourse between him and your souls, God and you being strangers to each other for ever—would you choose this rather than to leave the world, in order to dwell in heaven, as the children of God, there to enjoy the glorious privileges of children, in a holy and perfect love to God, and enjoyment of him to all eternity?

3. Do you prefer Christ to all others as the *way* to heaven? He who truly chooses God, prefers him in each person of the Trinity; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: the Father, as his Father; the Son, as his Saviour; the Holy Ghost, as his Sanctifier. Inquire, therefore, not only whether you choose the enjoyment of God in heaven as your highest portion and happiness, but also, whether you choose Jesus Christ before all others, as your way to heaven; and that in a sense of the excellency of Christ, and of the way of salvation by him, as being that which is to the glory of Christ, and of sovereign grace. Is the way of free grace, by the blood and righteousness of the blessed and

glorious Redeemer, the most excellent way to life in your esteem? Doth it add a value to the heavenly inheritance, that it is conferred in this way? Is this far better to you than to be saved by your own righteousness, by any of your own performances, or by any other mediator?

4. If you might go to heaven in what course you please, would you prefer to all others the way of a *strict walk* with God? They who prefer God as hath been represented, choose him, not only in the end, but in the way. They had rather be with God than with any other, not only when they come to the end of their journey; but also while they are in their pilgrimage. They choose the way of walking with God, though it be a way of labour, and care, and self-denial, rather than a way of sin, though it be a way of sloth, and of gratifying their lusts.

5. Were you to spend your eternity in this world, would you choose rather to live in mean and low circumstances with the gracious presence of God, than to live for ever in earthly prosperity without him. Would you rather spend it in holy living, and serving and walking with God, and in the enjoyment of the privileges of his children? God often manifesting himself to you as your Father, discovering to you his glory, and manifesting his love, lifting the light of his countenance upon you! Would you rather choose these things, though in poverty, than to abound in worldly things, and to live in ease and prosperity, at the same time being an alien from the commonwealth of Israel? Could you be content to stand in no child-like relation to God, enjoying no gracious intercourse with him, having no right to be acknowledged by him as his children? Or would such a life as this, though in ever so great earthly prosperity, be esteemed by you a miserable life?

If, after all, there remain with you doubts, and a difficulty to determine concerning yourselves, whether you do truly and sincerely prefer God to all other things, I would mention two things which are the surest ways to be determined in this matter, and which seem to be the best grounds of satisfaction in it.

1. The feeling of some particular, strong, and lively *exercise* of such a spirit. A person may have such a spirit as is spoken of in the doctrine, and may have the exercise of it in a low degree, and yet remain in doubt whether he have it or not, and be unable to come to a satisfying determination. But God is pleased, sometimes, to give such discoveries of his glory, and of the excellency of Christ, as do so draw forth the heart, that they know, beyond all doubt, that they feel such a spirit as Paul spake of, when he said, "He counted all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus his Lord;" and they can boldly say, as in the text, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." At such times, the people of God do not need any help of minis-

ters to satisfy them whether they have the true love of God; they plainly see and feel it; and the Spirit of God then witnesseth with their spirits, that they are the children of God.—Therefore, if you would be satisfied upon this point, earnestly seek such attainments; seek, that you may have such clear and lively exercises of this spirit. To this end, you must labour to grow in grace. Though you have had such experiences in times past, and they satisfied you then, yet you may again doubt. You should, therefore, seek, that you may have them more frequently; and the way to that is, earnestly to press forward, that you may have more acquaintance with God, and have the principles of grace strengthened. This is the way to have the exercises of grace stronger, more lively, and more frequent, and so to be satisfied that you have a spirit of supreme love to God.

2. The other way is, to inquire, whether you prefer God to all other things in *practice; i. e.* when you have occasion to manifest by your practice which you prefer—when you must either cleave to one or the other, and must either forsake other things, or forsake God—whether then it be your manner practically to prefer God to all other things whatever, even to those earthly things to which your hearts are most wedded. Are your lives those of adherence to God, and of serving him in this manner?

He who sincerely prefers God to all other things in his heart, will do it in his practice. For, when God, and all other things, come to stand in competition, that is the proper trial what a man chooses; and the manner of acting in such cases must certainly determine what the choice is in all free agents, or those who act on choice. Therefore, there is no sign of sincerity so much insisted on in the Bible as this, that we deny ourselves, sell all, forsake the world, take up the cross, and follow Christ whithersoever he goeth. Therefore, so run, not as uncertainly; so fight, not as those that beat the air; but keep under your bodies, and bring them into subjection. Act not as though you counted yourselves to have apprehended; but this one thing do, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." 2 Pet. i. 5, &c. "And, besides this, giving diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For, if these things be in you, and abound, they make you, that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

SERMON III.*

THE SOLE CONSIDERATION, THAT GOD IS GOD, SUFFICIENT TO STILL ALL OBJECTIONS TO HIS SOVEREIGNTY.

PSALM XLVI. 10.

Be still, and know that I am God.

THIS psalm seems to be a song of the church in a time of great revolutions and desolations in the world. Therefore the church glories in God as her refuge, and strength, and present help, even in times of the greatest troubles and overturnings, ver. 1—3. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." The church makes her boast of God, not only as being her help, by defending her from the desolations and calamities in which the rest of the world were involved, but also by supplying her, as a never-failing river, with refreshment, comfort and joy, in the times of public calamities. See ver. 4, 5, "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early."

In the 6th and 8th verses are set forth the terrible changes and calamities which were in the world: "The Heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. Come, behold the works of God, what desolation he hath made in the earth." In the verse preceding the text, is elegant-

* Dated June, 1735.

ly set forth the manner in which God delivers the church from these calamities, and especially from the desolations of war, and the rage of their enemies: "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire;" *i. e.* he maketh wars to cease when they are against his people; he breaketh the bow when bent against his saints.

Then follow the words of the text: "Be still, and know that I am God." The great works of God, wherein his sovereignty appeared, had been described in the foregoing verses. In the awful desolations that he made, and by delivering his people by terrible things, he showed his greatness and dominion. Herein he manifested his power and sovereignty, and so commands all *to be still, and know that he is God.* For says he, "I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth."

In the words may be observed,

1. A duty described to be still before God, and under the dispensations of his providence; which implies that we must be still as to *words;* not speaking against the sovereign dispensations of Providence, or complaining of them; not darkening counsel by words without knowledge, or justifying ourselves, and speaking great swelling words of vanity. We must be still as to *actions* and outward behaviour, so as not to oppose God in his dispensations; and as to *the inward frame of our hearts*, cultivating a calm and quiet submission of soul to the sovereign pleasure of God, whatever it be.

2. We may observe the ground of this duty, viz. *the divinity of God.* His being God is a sufficient reason why we should be still before him, in no wise murmuring, or objecting, or opposing, but calmly and humbly submitting to him.

3. How we must fulfil this duty, of being still before God, *viz.* with a sense of his divinity, as seeing the ground of this duty, in that we know him to be God. Our submission is to be such as becomes rational creatures. God doth not require us to submit contrary to reason, but to submit as seeing the reason and ground of submission.—Hence the bare consideration *that God is God*, may well be sufficient to still all objections and opposition against the divine sovereign dispensations.

This may appear by the following things:

1. In that he is God, he is an absolutely and infinitely *perfect* being; and it is impossible that he should do amiss. As he is eternal, and receives not his existence from any other, he cannot be limited in his being, or any attribute, to any certain determinate quantity. If any thing have bounds fixed to it, there

must be some cause or reason why those bounds are fixed just where they are. Whence it will follow, that every limited thing must have some cause; and therefore that being which has no cause must be unlimited.

It is most evident by the works of God, that his understanding and power are infinite; for he that hath made all things out of nothing, and upholds, and governs, and manages all things every moment, in all ages, without growing weary, must be of infinite power. He must also be of infinite knowledge; for if he made all things, and upholds and governs all things continually, it will follow, that he knows and perfectly sees all things, great and small, in heaven and earth, continually at one view; which cannot be without infinite understanding.

Being thus infinite in understanding and power, he must also be perfectly holy; for unholiness always argues some defect, some blindness. Where there is no darkness or delusion, there can be no unholiness. It is impossible that wickedness should consist with infinite light. God being infinite in power and knowledge, he must be self-sufficient and all-sufficient; therefore it is impossible that he should be under any temptation to do any thing amiss; for he can have no end in doing it. When any are tempted to do amiss, it is for selfish ends. But how can an all-sufficient Being, who wants nothing, be tempted to do evil for selfish ends? So that God is essentially holy, and nothing is more impossible than that God should do amiss.

2. As he is God, he is so *great*, that he is infinitely above all comprehension; and therefore it is unreasonable in us to quarrel with his dispensations, because they are mysterious. If he were a being that we could comprehend, he would not be God. It would be unreasonable to suppose any other, than that there should be many things in the nature of God, and in his works and government, to us mysterious, and which we never can fully find out.

What are we? and what do we make of ourselves, when we expect that God and his ways should be upon a level with our understandings? We are infinitely unequal to any such thing, as comprehending God. We may less unreasonably expect that a nut-shell should contain the ocean: Job xi. 7, &c. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." If we were sensible of the distance which there is between God and us, we should see the reasonableness of that interrogation of the apostle, Rom. ix. 20. "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God."

If we find fault with God's government, we virtually suppose ourselves fit to be God's counsellors; whereas it becomes

us rather, with great humility and adoration, to cry out with the apostle, Rom. ix. 33, &c. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever." If little children should rise up and find fault with the supreme legislature of a nation, or quarrel with the mysterious administrations of the sovereign, would it not be looked upon that they meddled with things too high for them? And what are we but babes? Our understandings are infinitely less than those of babes, in comparison with the wisdom of God. It becomes us therefore to be sensible of it, and to behave ourselves accordingly. Psalm cxxxi. 1, 2. "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child."

This consideration alone of the infinite distance between God and us, and between God's understanding and ours, should be enough to still and quiet us concerning all that God does, however mysterious and unintelligible to us.—Nor have we any right to expect, that God should particularly explain to us the reason of his dispensations. It is fit that God should not give any account of his matters to us, worms of the dust, that we may be sensible of our distance from him, and adore and submit to him in humble reverence.

Therefore we find, that when Job was so full of difficulty about the divine dispensations, God did not answer him by particularly explaining the reasons of his mysterious providence; but by showing him what a poor worm, what a nothing he was, and how much he himself was above him. This more became God than it would have done to enter into a particular debate with him, or to unfold the mysterious difficulties: it became Job to submit to God in those things that he could not understand, and to this the reply tended to bring him. It is fit that God should dwell in thick darkness, or in light to which no man can approach, which no man hath seen or can see. No wonder that a God of infinite glory shines with a brightness too strong for mortal eyes. For the angels themselves, those mighty spirits, are represented as covering their faces in this light; Isa. vi.

3. As he is God, all things are his *own*, and he hath a right to dispose of them according to his own pleasure. All things in this lower world are his; Job xli. 11. "Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine. Yea, the whole universe is God's; Deut. x. 14. "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's; the earth also, with all that is therein." All things are his, because all things are from him; they are

wholly from him, and from him alone. Those things which are made by men are not wholly from them. When a man builds a house, it is not wholly from him; nothing of which the house is made has its being from him. But all creatures are wholly and entirely the fruits of God's power, and therefore it is fit that they should be subject to, and for his pleasure, Prov. xvi. 4. And as all things are *from* God, so they are upheld in being *by* him, and would sink into nothing in a moment, if he did not uphold them. And all things are *to* him. Rom. xi. 36. "For by him, and through him, and *to* him, are all things." Col. i. 16, 17. "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers, all things were created *by* him and *for* him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." All mankind are his; their lives, and breath, and being; "for in him we live, and move, and have our being." Our souls and capacities are from him. Ezek. xviii. 4. "All souls are mine: as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine."

4. In that he is God, he is *worthy* to be sovereign over all things. Sometimes men are the owners of more than they are worthy of. But God is not only the owner of the whole world, as all is from and dependent on him; but such is his perfection, the excellency and dignity of his nature, that he is worthy of sovereignty over all. No man ought in the temper of his mind to be opposite to God's exercising the sovereignty of the universe, as if he were not worthy of it; for to be the absolute sovereign of the universe is not a glory or dignity too great for him. All things in heaven and earth, angels and men, are nothing in comparison with him; all are as the drop of the bucket, and as the light dust of the balance. It is therefore fit that every thing should be in his hands, to be disposed of according to his pleasure.—His will and pleasure are of infinitely greater importance than the will of creatures. It is fit that his will should take place, though contrary to the will of all other beings; that he should make himself his own end; and order all things for himself.—God is possessed of such perfections and excellencies as to qualify him to be the absolute sovereign of the world.—Certainly it is more fit that all things be under the guidance of a perfect unerring wisdom, than that they should be left to themselves to fall in confusion, or be brought to pass by blind causes. Yea, it is not fit that *any* affairs within the government of God should be left without the direction of his wise providence; least of all, things of the greatest importance.

It is absurd to suppose that God is *obliged* to keep every creature from sinning and exposing himself to an adequate punishment. For if so, then it will follow that there can be no such thing as a *moral government* of God over reasonable crea-

tures; and it would be an absurdity for God to give commands; for he himself would be the party bound to see to the performance, and there could be no use of promises or threatenings. But if God may leave a creature to sin, and to expose himself to punishment, then it is much fitter and better that the matter should be ordered by wisdom, who should justly lie exposed by sin to punishment, and who not; than that it be left to come to pass by confused chance. It is unworthy of the governor of the world to leave things to chance; it belongs to him to govern all things by wisdom.—And as God has *wisdom* to qualify him to be sovereign, so he has *power* also to enable him to execute the determinations of wisdom. And he is essentially and invariably *holy* and *righteous*, and infinitely *good:* whereby he is qualified to govern the world in the best manner.—Therefore, when he acts as sovereign of the world, it is fit that we should be still, and willingly submit, and in nowise oppose his having the glory of his sovereignty; but should in a sense of his worthiness, cheerfully ascribe it to him, and say, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever;" and say with those in Rev. v. 13. "Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be to him that sitteth upon the throne."

5. In that he is God, he *will* be sovereign, and *will* act as such. He sits on the throne of his sovereignty, and his kingdom ruleth over all. He will be exalted in his sovereign power and dominion, as he himself declares; "I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." He will have all men to know, that he is most high over all the earth. He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand. There is no such thing as frustrating, or baffling, or undermining his designs; for he is great in counsel, and wonderful in working. His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord; whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever; nothing shall be put to it, nor any thing taken from it. He will work, and who shall let it? He is able to dash in pieces the enemy. If men join hand in hand against him, to hinder or oppose his designs, he breaks the bow, he cuts the spear in sunder, he burneth the chariot in the fire.—He kills, and he makes alive, he brings down and raises up just as he pleases. Isa. xlv. 6, 7. "That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is none else; I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things."

Great men, and rich men, and wise men cannot hinder God from doing his pleasure. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled; he accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor. There are many devices in a

man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord that shall stand, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations.—When he gives quietness, who can make trouble? When he hides his face, who can behold him? He breaketh down, and it cannot be built up again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening; when he purposeth, who shall disannul it? And when his hand is stretched out, who shall turn it back?—So there is no hindering God from being sovereign, and acting as such.—"He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." He hath the keys of hell and of death; he openeth, and no man shutteth: he shutteth, and no man openeth. This may show us the folly of opposing ourselves against the sovereign dispensations of God; and how much more wisely they act who quietly and sweetly submit to his sovereign will.

6. In that he is God, he is able to *avenge* himself on those who oppose his sovereignty. He is wise of heart, and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against God and prospered! He that will contend with God, must answer it. And what a poor creature is man to fight against God! Is he able to make his part good with him? Whoever of God's enemies deal proudly, he will show that he is above them. They will be but as the chaff before the whirlwind, and shall be as the fat of lambs; they shall consume into smoke, they shall consume away. "Who would set the briers and thorns against him in battle? He would go through them, he would burn them together." Isa. xxvii. 4.

APPLICATION.

A manifold improvement might be made of this doctrine, which a little reflection may suggest to each of us. But the improvement which I shall at this time make of it, shall be only in an *use of reproof* to such under convictions of sin, and fears of hell, as are not still, but oppose the sovereignty of God in the disposals of his grace. This doctrine shows the unreasonableness, and dreadful wickedness, of your refusing heartily to own the sovereignty of God in this matter. It shows that you know not *that God is God.* If you knew this, you would be inwardly still and quiet; you would humbly and calmly lie in the dust before a sovereign God, and would see sufficient reason for it.

In objecting and quarrelling about the righteousness of God's laws and threatenings, and his sovereign dispensations towards you and others, you oppose his *divinity*, you show your ignorance of his divine greatness and excellency, and that you cannot bear that he should have divine honour. It is from low mean thoughts of God, that you do in your minds oppose his so-

vereignty, that you are not sensible how dangerous your conduct is, and what an audacious thing it is for such a creature as man to strive with his Maker.

What poor creatures are you, that you should set up yourselves for judges over the Most High; that you should take it upon you to call God to an account; that you should say to the great Jehovah, what dost thou? and that you should pass sentence against him! If you knew that he is God, you would not act in this manner; but this knowledge would be sufficient to still and calm you concerning all God's dispensations, and you would say with Eli, in 1 Sam. iii. 18—"It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his sight."—But here I shall be more particular in several things.

1. It is from *mean thoughts* of God, that you are not convinced that you have, by your sins, deserved his eternal wrath and curse. If you had any proper sense of the infinite majesty, greatness, and holiness of God, you would see, that to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and there to have no rest, day nor night, is not a punishment more than equal to the demerit of sin.—You would not have so good a thought of yourselves; you would not be so clean and pure in your own eyes; you would see what vile, unworthy, hell-deserving creatures you are. If you had not little thoughts of God, and were to consider how you have set yourselves against him—how you have slighted him, his commandments, and threatenings, and despised his goodness and mercy; how often you have disobeyed; how obstinate you have been; how your whole lives have been filled up with sin against God—you would not wonder that God threatens to destroy you for ever, but would wonder that he hath not actually done it before now.

If you had not mean thoughts of God, you would not find fault with him for not setting his love on you who never exercised any love to him. You would not think it unjust in God not to seek your interest and eternal welfare, who never would be persuaded at all to seek his glory; you would not think it unjust in him to slight and disregard you, who have so often and so long made light of God. If you had not mean thoughts of God, you never would think him obliged to bestow eternal salvation upon you, who have never been truly thankful for one mercy which you have already received of him.—What do you think of yourselves? what great ideas have you of yourselves? and what thoughts have you of God, that you think he is obliged to do so much for you, though you treat him ever so ungratefully for the kindness which he hath already bestowed upon you all the days of your lives? It must be from little thoughts of God, that you think it unjust in him not to regard you when you call upon him; when he hath earnestly called to you, so long and so often, and you would not be persuaded to hearken to him.

What thoughts have you of God, that you think he is more obliged to hear what you say to him, than you are to regard what he says to you?

It is from diminutive thoughts of God, that you think he is obliged to show mercy to you when you seek it, though you have been for a long time wilfully sinning against him, provoking him to anger, and presuming that he would show you mercy when you should seek it. What kind of thoughts have you of God, that you think he is obliged, as it were, to yield himself up to be abused by men, so that when they have done, his mercy and pardoning grace shall not be in his own power, but he must be obliged to dispense them at their call!

2. It is from little thoughts of God, that you quarrel against his justice in the *condemnation of sinners*, from the doctrine of original sin. It must be because you do not know him to be God, and will not allow him to be sovereign. It is for want of a sense how much God is above you, that those things in him which are above your comprehension, are such difficulties and stumbling-blocks to you; it is for want of a sense how much the wisdom and understanding of God are above yours, and what poor short-sighted, blind creatures you are in comparison with him. If you were sensible what God is, you would see it most reasonable to expect that his ways should be far above the reason of man, and that he dwells in light which no man can approach unto, which no man hath seen, nor can see.—If men were sensible how excellent and perfect a Being he is, they would not be so apt to be jealous of him, and to suspect him in things which lie beyond their understandings. It would be no difficulty with them to trust God out of sight. What horrid arrogance in worms of the dust, that they should think they have wisdom enough to examine and determine concerning what God doth, and to pass sentence on it as unjust? If you were sensible how great and glorious a being God is, it would not be such a difficulty with you to allow him the dignity of such absolute sovereignty, as that he should order as he pleases, whether every single man should stand for himself, or whether a common Father should stand for all.

3. It is from mean thoughts of God, that you trust in your *own righteousness*, and think that God ought to respect you for it. If you knew how great a Being he is, if you saw that he is God indeed, you would see how unworthy, how miserable a present it is to be offered to such a Being. It is because you are blind, and know not what a being he is with whom you have to do, that you make so much of your own righteousness. If you had your eyes open to see that he is God indeed, you would wonder how you could think to commend

yourselves to so great a Being by your gifts, by such poor affections, such broken prayers, wherein is so much hypocrisy, and so much selfishness.—If you had not very mean thoughts of God, you would wonder that ever you could think of purchasing the favour and love of so great a God by your services. You would see that it would be unworthy of God to bestow such a mercy upon you, as peace with him, and his everlasting love, and the enjoyment of himself, for such a price as you have to offer: and that he would exceedingly dishonour himself in so doing.—If you saw what God is, you would exclaim, as Job did, Job lii. 5, 6. "Now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." And as Isaiah did, chap. vi. 5. "Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

4. It is from mean thoughts of God, that you contend with him, because he bestows grace on some, and not on others. Thus God doth: he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; he takes one, and leaves another, of those who are in like circumstances; as it is said of Jacob and Esau, while they were not yet born, and had done neither good nor evil, Rom. ix. 10—13. With this sinners often quarrel; but they who upon this ground quarrel with God, suppose him to be *bound* to bestow his grace on sinners. For if he be bound to none, then he may take his choice, and bestow it on whom he pleases; and his bestowing it on some, brings no obligation on him to bestow it on others. Has God no right to his own grace? is it not at his own disposal? and is God incapable of making a gift or present of it to any man? for a person cannot make a present of that which is not his own, or in his own right. It is impossible to *give a debt*.

But what a low thought of God does this argue! Consider what it is you would make of God. Must he be so tied up, that he cannot use his own pleasure in bestowing his own gifts? Is he obliged to bestow them on one, because it is his pleasure to bestow them on another? Is not God worthy to have the same right to dispose of his gifts, as a man has of his money? or is it because God is not so great, and therefore should be more subject, more under bounds, than men? Is not God worthy to have as absolute a propriety in his goods as man has in his? At this rate, God cannot make a present of any thing; he has nothing of his own to bestow. If he have a mind to show a peculiar favour to some, to lay some under special obligations, he cannot do it, on the supposition, because his favour is not at his own disposal! The truth is, men have low thoughts of God, or else they would willingly ascribe sovereignty to him in this matter. Matt. xx. 15. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"

God is pleased to show mercy to his enemies, according to his own sovereign pleasure. And surely it is fit he should. How unreasonable is it to think that God stands bound to his enemies! Therefore consider what you do in quarrelling with God, and opposing his sovereignty. Consider with whom it is you contend. Let all who are sensible of their misery, and afraid of the wrath of God, consider these things. Those of you who have been long seeking salvation, but are in great terrors through fear that God will destroy you, consider what you have heard, *be still, and know that he is God.* When God seems to turn a deaf ear to your cries; when he seems to frown upon you; when he shows mercy to others, your equals, or those who are worse, and who have been seeking a less time than you;—be still. Consider who he is that disposes and orders these things. You shall consider it; you shall know it: he will make all men to know that *he is* God. You shall either know it for your good here, by submission, or to your cost hereafter.

SERMON IV.*

GREAT GUILT NO OBSTACLE TO THE PARDON OF THE RETURNING SINNER.

PSALM XXV. 11.

For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.

IT is evident by some passages in this psalm, that when it was penned, it was a time of affliction and danger with David. This appears particularly by the 15th and following verses: "Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net," &c. His distress makes him think of his sins, and leads him to confess them, and to cry to God for pardon, as is suitable in a time of affliction. See verse 7. "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions;" and verse 18. "Look upon mine affliction, and my pain, and forgive all my sins."

It is observable in the text, what arguments the psalmist makes use of in pleading for pardon.

1. He pleads for pardon *for God's name's sake.* He has no expectation of pardon for the sake of any righteousness or worthiness of his for any good deeds he had done, or any compensation he had made for his sins; though if man's righteousness could be a just plea, David would have had as much to plead as most. But he begs that God would do it for his own name's sake, for his own glory, for the glory of his own free grace, and for the honour of his own covenant-faithfulness.

* Not dated. All the Sermons in this collection which are not dated, are supposed to have been written before the year 1733, as from that period our author dated his Sermons.

2. The psalmist pleads the *greatness of his sins* as an argument for mercy. He not only doth not plead his own righteousness, or the smallness of his sins; he not only doth not say, Pardon mine iniquity, for I have done much good to counterbalance it; or, Pardon mine iniquity, for it is small, and thou hast no great reason to be angry with me; mine iniquity is not so great that thou hast any just cause to remember it against me; mine offence is not such but that thou mayest well enough overlook it; but on the contrary he says, *Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great:* he pleads the greatness of his sin, and not the smallness of it; he enforces his prayer with this consideration, that his sins are very heinous.

But how could he make this a plea for pardon? I answer, Because the greater his iniquity was, the more *need* he had of pardon. It is as much as if he had said, Pardon mine iniquity, for it is so great that I cannot bear the punishment; my sin is so great that I am in necessity of pardon; my case will be exceedingly miserable, unless thou be pleased to pardon me. He makes use of the greatness of his sin to enforce his plea for pardon, as a man would make use of the greatness of calamity, in begging for relief. When a beggar begs for bread, he will plead the greatness of his poverty and necessity. When a man in distress cries for pity, what more suitable plea can be urged than the extremity of his case?—And God allows such a plea as this: for he is moved to mercy towards us by nothing in us but the miserableness of our case. He doth not pity sinners because they are worthy, but because they need his pity.

Doctrine. *If we truly come to God for mercy, the greatness of our sin will be no impediment to pardon.*—If it were an impediment, David would never have used it as a plea for pardon, as we find he does in the text.—The following things are needful in order that we truly come to God for mercy:

I. That we should see *our misery*, and be *sensible* of our need of mercy. They who are not sensible of their misery cannot truly look to God for mercy; for it is the very notion of divine mercy, that it is the goodness and grace of God to the miserable. Without misery in the object, there can be no exercise of mercy. To suppose mercy without supposing misery, or pity without calamity, is a contradiction: therefore men cannot look upon themselves as proper objects of mercy, unless they first know themselves to be miserable; and so unless this be the case, it is impossible that they should come to God for mercy. They must be sensible that they are the children of wrath; that the law is against them, and that they are exposed to the curse of it; that the wrath of God abideth on them; and that he is angry with them every day while they are under the

guilt of sin.—They must be sensible that it is a very dreadful thing to be the object of the wrath of God; that it is a very awful thing to have him for their enemy; and that they cannot bear his wrath. They must be sensible that the guilt of sin makes them miserable creatures, whatever temporal enjoyments they have; that they can be no other than miserable, undone creatures, so long as God is angry with them; that they are without strength, and must perish, and that eternally, unless God help them. They must see that their case is utterly desperate, for any thing that any one else can do for them; that they hang over the pit of eternal misery; and that they must necessarily drop into it, if God have not mercy on them.

II. They must be sensible that they *are not worthy* that God should have mercy on them. They who truly come to God for mercy, come as beggars, and not as creditors: they come for mere mercy, for sovereign grace, and not for any thing that is due. Therefore, they must see that the misery under which they lie is justly brought upon them, and that the wrath to which they are exposed is *justly* threatened against them; and that they have *deserved* that God should *be* their enemy, and should *continue* to be their enemy. They must be sensible that it would be just with God to do as he hath threatened in his holy law, *viz.* make them the objects of his wrath and curse in hell to all eternity.—They who come to God for mercy in a right manner, are not disposed to find fault with his severity; but they come in a sense of their own utter unworthiness, as with ropes about their necks, and lying in the dust at the foot of mercy.

III. They must come to God for mercy in and *through Jesus Christ* alone. All their hope of mercy must be from the consideration of what he is, what he hath done, and what he hath suffered; and that there is no other name given under heaven, among men, whereby we can be saved, but that of Christ; that he is the Son of God, and the saviour of the world; that his blood cleanses from all sin, and that he is so worthy, that all sinners who are in him may well be pardoned and accepted.—It is impossible that any should *come* to God for mercy, and at the same time have no *hope* of mercy. Their coming to God for it, implies that they have some hope of obtaining, otherwise they would not think it worth the while to come. But they that come in a right manner have all their hope through Christ, or from the consideration of his redemption, and the sufficiency of it.—If persons thus come to God for mercy, the greatness of their sins will be no impediment to pardon. Let their sins be ever so many, and great, and aggravated, it

will not make God in the least degree more backward to pardon them. This may be made evident by the following considerations:

1. *The mercy of God* is as sufficient for the pardon of the greatest sins, as for the least; and that because his mercy is infinite. That which is infinite, is as much above what is great, as it is above what is small. Thus God being infinitely great, he is as much above kings, as he is above beggars; he is as much above the highest angel, as he is above the meanest worm. One infinite measure doth not come any nearer to the extent of what is infinite, than another. So the mercy of God being infinite, it must be as sufficient for the pardon of all sin, as of one. If one of the least sins be not beyond the mercy of God, so neither are the greatest, or ten thousand of them.—However, it must be acknowledged, that this alone doth not prove the doctrine. For, though the mercy of God may be as sufficient for the pardon of great sins as others, yet there may be other obstacles, besides the want of mercy. The mercy of God may be sufficient, and yet the other attributes may oppose the dispensation of mercy in these cases.—Therefore, I observe,

2. That the *satisfaction of Christ* is as sufficient for the removal of the greatest guilt, as the least: 1 John i. 7. "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." Acts xiii. 39. "By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." All the sins of those who truly come to God for mercy, let them be what they will, are satisfied for, if God be true who tells us so; and if they be satisfied for, surely it is not incredible that God should be ready to pardon them. So that Christ, having fully satisfied for all sin, or having wrought out a satisfaction that is sufficient for all, it is now no way inconsistent with the glory of the divine attributes, to pardon the greatest sins of those who in a right manner come unto him for it. God may now pardon the greatest sinners, without any prejudice to the honour of his holiness. The holiness of God will not suffer him to give the least countenance to sin, but inclines him to give proper testimonies of his hatred of it. But Christ having satisfied for sin, God can now love the sinner, and give no countenance at all to sin, however great a sinner he may have been. It was a sufficient testimony of God's abhorrence of sin, that he poured out his wrath on his own dear Son, when he took the guilt of it upon himself. Nothing can more show God's abhorrence of sin than this. If all mankind had been eternally damned, it would not have been so great a testimony of it.

God may, through Christ, pardon the *greatest sinner*, without any prejudice to the honour of his majesty. The honour of the divine majesty, indeed, requires satisfaction; but the suf-

ferings of Christ fully repair the injury. Let the contempt be ever so great, yet if so honourable a person as Christ undertakes to be a Mediator for the offender, and suffers so much for him, it fully repairs the injury done to the Majesty of heaven and earth. The sufferings of Christ fully satisfy justice. The justice of God, as the supreme Governor and Judge of the world, requires the punishment of sin. The supreme Judge must judge the world according to a rule of justice. God doth not show mercy as a judge, but as a sovereign; therefore his exercise of mercy as a sovereign, and his justice as a judge, must be made consistent one with another; and this is done by the sufferings of Christ, in which sin is punished fully, and justice answered. Rom. iii. 25, 26. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." The law is no impediment in the way of the pardon of the greatest sin, if men do but truly come to God for mercy. For Christ hath fulfilled the law; he hath borne the curse of it, in his sufferings; Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

3. Christ *will not refuse* to save the greatest sinners, who, in a right manner, come to God for mercy; for this is his work. It is his business to be a Saviour of sinners; it is the work upon which he came into the world; and, therefore, he will not object to it. He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, Matt. ix. 13. Sin is the very evil which he came into the world to remedy; therefore he will not object to any man, that he is very sinful. The more sinful he is, the more need of Christ. The sinfulness of man was the reason of Christ's coming into the world; this is the very misery from which he came to deliver men. The more they have of it, the more need they have of being delivered: "They that are whole, need not a physician; but they that are sick;" Matt. ix. 12. The physician will not make it an objection against healing a man who applies to him, that he stands in great need of his help. If a physician of compassion comes among the sick and wounded, surely he will not refuse to heal those that stand in most need of healing, if he be able to heal them.

4. Herein doth the *glory of grace*, by the redemption of Christ much consist, *viz.* in its sufficiency for the pardon of the greatest sinners. The whole contrivance of the way of salvation is for this end, to glorify the free grace of God. God had it on his heart, from all eternity, to glorify this attribute; and

therefore it is, that the device of saving sinners by Christ was conceived. The greatness of divine grace appears very much in this, that God by Christ saves the greatest offenders. The greater the guilt of any sinner is, the more glorious and wonderful is the grace manifested in his pardon: Rom. v. 20. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The apostle, when telling how great a sinner he had been, takes notice of the abounding of grace in his pardon, of which his great guilt was the occasion: 1 Tim. i. 13. "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy; and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." The Redeemer is glorified, in that he proves sufficient to redeem those who are exceeding sinful, in that his blood proves sufficient to wash away the greatest guilt, in that he is able to save men to the uttermost, and in that he redeems even from the greatest misery. It is the honour of Christ to save the greatest sinners, when they come to him, as it is the honour of a physician that he cures the most desperate diseases or wounds. Therefore, no doubt, Christ will be willing to save the greatest sinners, if they come to him; for he will not be backward to glorify himself, and to commend the value and virtue of his own blood. Seeing he hath so laid out himself to redeem sinners, he will not be unwilling to show that he is able to redeem to the uttermost.

5. Pardon is as much *offered and promised* to the greatest sinners as any, if they will come aright to God for mercy. The invitations of the gospel are always in universal terms: as, Ho, every one that thirsteth; come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden; and whosoever will, let him come. And the voice of Wisdom is to men in general: Prov. viii. 4. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Not to moral men, or religious men, but *to you, O men.* So Christ promises, John vi. 37. "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." This is the direction of Christ to his apostles, after his resurrection, Mark xvi. 15, 16. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved:" which is agreeable to what the apostle saith, that "the gospel was preached to every creature which is under heaven," Col. i. 23.

APPLICATION.

The proper *use* of this subject is, to encourage sinners whose consciences are burdened with a sense of guilt, immediately to go to God, through Christ, for mercy. If you go in the manner we have described, the arms of mercy are open to em-

brace you. You need not be at all the more fearful of coming because of your sins, let them be ever so black. If you had as much guilt lying on each of your souls as all the wicked men in the world, and all the damned souls in hell; yet if you come to God for mercy, sensible of your own vileness, and seeking pardon only through the free mercy of God in Christ, you would not need to be afraid; the greatness of your sins would be no impediment to your pardon. Therefore if your souls be burdened, and you are distressed for fear of hell, you need not bear that burden and distress any longer. If you are but *willing*, you may freely come and unload yourselves, and cast all your burdens on Christ, and rest in him.

But here I shall speak to some OBJECTIONS which some awakened sinners may be ready to make against what I now exhort them to.

1. Some may be ready to object, I have spent my youth and all the best of my life in sin, and I am afraid God will not accept of me when I offer him only mine old age. To this I would answer,—1. Hath God said any where, that he will not accept of *old sinners* who come to him? God hath often made offers and promises in universal terms; and is there any such exception put in? Doth Christ say, all that thirst, let them come to me and drink, *except* old sinners? Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, except old sinners, and I will give you rest? Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out, if he be not an old sinner? Did you ever read any such exception any where in the Bible? And why should you give way to exceptions which you make out of your own heads, or rather which the devil puts into your heads, and which have no foundation in the word of God?—Indeed it is more rare that old sinners are willing to come, than others; but if they do come, they are as readily accepted as any whatever.

2. When God accepts of young persons, it is not for the sake of the service which they are like to do him afterwards, or because youth is better worth accepting than old age. You seem entirely to mistake the matter, in thinking that God will not accept of you because you are old; as though he readily accepted of persons in their youth, because their youth is better worth his acceptance; whereas it is only for the sake of Jesus Christ, that God is willing to accept of any.

You say your life is almost spent, and you are afraid that the best time for serving God is past; and that therefore God will not now accept of you; as if it were for the sake of the service which persons are like to do him, after they are converted. that he accepts of them. But a self-righteous spirit is at the bottom of such objections. Men cannot get off from the notion, that it is for some goodness or service of their own,

either done or expected to be done, that God accepts of persons, and receives them into favour.—Indeed they who deny God their youth, the best part of their lives, and spend it in the service of Satan, dreadfully sin, and provoke God; and he very often leaves them to hardness of heart, when they are grown old. But if they are willing to accept of Christ when old, he is as ready to receive them as any others; for in that matter God hath respect only to Christ and his worthiness.

II. But I am afraid that I have committed sins that are peculiar to reprobates. I have sinned against light, and strong convictions of conscience; I have sinned presumptuously; and have so resisted the strivings of the Spirit of God, that I am afraid I have committed such sins as none of God's elect ever commit. I cannot think that God will ever leave one whom he intends to save, to go on and commit sins against so much light and conviction, and with such horrid presumption.—Others may say, I have had risings of heart against God; blasphemous thoughts, a spiteful and malicious spirit; and have abused mercy and the strivings of the Spirit, trampled upon the Saviour, and my sins are such as are peculiar to those who are reprobated to eternal damnation. To all this I would answer,

1. There is no sin peculiar to reprobates, but the sin against the Holy Ghost. Do you read of any other in the word of God? And if you do not read of any there, what ground have you to think any such thing? What other rule have we, by which to judge of such matters, but the divine word? If we venture to go beyond that, we shall be miserably in the dark. When we pretend to go farther in our determinations than the word of God, Satan takes us up, and leads us. It seems to you that such sins are peculiar to the reprobate, and such as God never forgives. But what reason can you give for it, if you have no word of God to reveal it? Is it because you cannot see how the mercy of God is sufficient to pardon, or the blood of Christ to cleanse from such presumptuous sins? If so, it is because you never yet saw how great the mercy of God is; you never saw the sufficiency of the blood of Christ, and you know not how far the virtue of it extends. Some elect persons have been guilty of all manner of sins, except the sin against the Holy Ghost; and unless you have been guilty of this, you have not been guilty of any that are peculiar to reprobates.

2. Men may be less likely to believe, for sins which they have committed, and not the less readily pardoned when they do believe. It must be acknowledged that some sinners are in more danger of hell than others. Though all are in great danger, some are less likely to be saved. Some are less likely ever to be converted and to come to Christ: but all who do come to

him are alike readily accepted; and there is as much encouragement for one man to come to Christ as another.—Such sins as you mention are indeed exceeding heinous and provoking to God, and do in an especial manner bring the soul into danger of damnation, and into danger of being given to final hardness of heart; and God more commonly gives men up to the judgment of final hardness for such sins, than for others. Yet they are not peculiar to reprobates; there is but one sin that is so, *viz.* that against the Holy Ghost. And notwithstanding the sins which you have committed, if you can find it in your hearts to come to Christ, and close with him, you will be accepted not at all the less readily because you have committed such sins.—Though God doth more rarely cause some sorts of sinners to come to Christ than others; it is not because his mercy or the redemption of Christ is not as sufficient for them as others, but because in wisdom he sees fit so to dispense his grace for a restraint upon the wickedness of men; and because it is his will to give converting grace in the use of means, among which this is one, *viz.* to lead a moral and religious life, and agreeable to our light, and the convictions of our consciences. But when once any sinner is willing to come to Christ, mercy is as ready for him as for any. There is no consideration at all had of his sins; let him have been ever so sinful, his sins are not remembered; God doth not upbraid him with them.

III. But had I not better stay till I shall have made myself better, before I presume to come to Christ. I have been, and see myself to be very wicked now: but am in hopes of mending myself, and rendering myself at least not so wicked: then I shall have more courage to come to God for mercy. In answer to this,

1. Consider how unreasonably you act. You are striving to set up yourselves for your own saviours; you are striving to get something of your own, on the account of which you may the more readily be accepted. So that by this it appears that you do not seek to be accepted only on Christ's account. And is not this to rob Christ of the glory of being your only Saviour? Yet this is the way in which you are hoping to make Christ willing to save you.

2. You can never come to Christ at all, unless you first see that he will not accept of you the more readily for any thing that you can do. You must first see that it is utterly in vain for you to try to make yourselves better on any such account. You must see that you can never make yourselves any more worthy, or less unworthy, by any thing which you can perform.

3. If ever you truly come to Christ, you must see that there is enough in him for your pardon, though you be no bet-

ter than you are. If you see not the sufficiency of Christ to pardon you, without any righteousness of your own to recommend you, you never will come so as to be accepted of him. The way to be accepted is to come—not on any such encouragement, that now you have made yourselves better, and more worthy, or not so unworthy, but—on the mere encouragement of Christ's worthiness, and God's mercy.

4. If ever you truly come to Christ, you must come to him to make you better. You must come as a patient comes to his physician, with his diseases or wounds to be cured. Spread all your wickedness before him, and do not plead your goodness; but plead your badness, and your necessity on that account; and say, as the psalmist in the text, not pardon mine iniquity, for it is not so great as it was; but, "Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great."

SERMON V.*

THE MOST HIGH A PRAYER-HEARING GOD.

PSALM XLV. 2.

O thou that hearest Prayer.

THIS psalm seems to be written, either as a psalm of praise to God for some remarkable answer of prayer, in the bestowment of some public mercy; or else, on occasion of some special faith and confidence which David had that his prayer would be answered. It is probable that this mercy bestowed, or expected to be bestowed, was some great public mercy, for which David had been very earnest and importunate, and had annexed a vow to his prayer; and that he had vowed to God, that if he would grant him his request, he would render him praise and glory. This seems to be the reason why he expresses himself as he does in the first verse of the psalm: "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed;" *i. e.* that praise which I have vowed to give thee, on the answer of my prayer, waiteth for thee, to be given thee as soon as thou shalt have answered my prayer; and the vow which I made to thee shall be performed.

In the verse of the text, there is a prophecy of the glorious times of the gospel, when "all flesh shall come" to the true God, as to *the God who heareth prayer;* which is here mentioned as what distinguishes the true God from the gods to whom the nations prayed and sought, those gods who cannot hear, and cannot answer their prayer. The time was coming when all

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flesh should come to that God who *doth hear prayer*.—Hence we gather this doctrine, *that it is the character of the Most High, that he is a God who hears prayer.*

I shall handle this point in the following method:

1. Show that the Most High is a *God that hears prayer.*
2. That he is *eminently* such a God.
3. That herein he is *distinguished* from all false gods.
4. Give the *reasons* of the doctrine.

I. The Most High is a God that *hears prayer.* Though he is infinitely above all, and stands in no need of creatures; yet he is graciously pleased to take a merciful notice of poor worms of the dust. He manifests and presents himself as the object of prayer, appears as sitting on a mercy-seat, that men may come to him by prayer. When they stand in need of any thing, he allows them to come, and ask it of him; and he is wont to hear their prayers. God in his word hath given many promises that he will hear their prayers; the scripture is full of such examples; and in his dispensations towards his church, manifests himself to be a God that hears prayer.

Here it may be inquired, What is meant by God's hearing prayer? There are two things implied in it.

1. His *accepting* the supplications of those who pray to him. Their address to him is well taken, he is well pleased with it. He approves of their asking such mercies as they request of him, and approves of their manner of doing it. He accepts of their prayers as an offering to him; he accepts the honour they do him in prayer.

2. He *acts* agreeably to his acceptance. He sometimes manifests his acceptance of their prayers, by special discoveries of his mercy and sufficiency which he makes to them *in prayer*, or immediately after. While they are praying, he gives them sweet views of his glorious grace, purity, sufficiency, and sovereignty; and enables them, with great quietness to rest in him, to leave themselves and their prayers with him, submitting to his will, and trusting in his grace and faithfulness. Such a manifestation God seems to have made of himself in prayer to *Hannah*, which quieted and composed her mind, and took away her sadness. We read (1 Sam. i.) how earnest she was, and how exercised in her mind, and that she was a woman of a sorrowful spirit. But she came and poured out her soul before God, and spake out of the abundance of her complaint and grief: then we read, that she went away, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad, verse 13; which seems to have been from some refreshing discoveries which God had made of himself to her, to enable her quietly to submit to his will, and trust in his mercy, whereby God manifested his acceptance of her.—Not that I conclude persons can hence

argue, that the particular thing which they ask will certainly be given them, or that they can particularly foretel from it what God will do in answer to their prayers, any further than he has promised in his word; yet God may, and doubtless does, thus testify his acceptance of their prayers, and from hence they may confidently rest in his providence. in his merciful ordering and disposing, with respect to the thing that they ask. Again, God manifests his acceptance of their prayers, by *doing* for them agreeably to their needs and supplications. He not only inwardly and spiritually discovers his mercy to their souls by his Spirit, but outwardly by dealing mercifully with them in his providence, in consequence of their prayers, and by causing an agreeableness between his providence and their prayers.——I proceed now,

II. To show that the Most High is *eminently* a God that hears prayer. This appears in several things.

1. In his giving such *free access* to him by prayer. God in his word manifests himself ready at all times to allow us this privilege. He sits on a throne of grace; and there is no veil to hide this throne, and keep us from it. The veil is rent from the top to the bottom; the way is open at all times, and we may go to God as often as we please. Although God be infinitely above us, yet we may come with boldness: Heb. iv. 14, 16. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." How wonderful is it that such worms as we should be allowed to come boldly at all times to so great a God! Thus God indulges all kinds of persons, of all nations. 1 Cor. i. 2, 3. "Unto all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. both theirs and ours; grace be unto you," &c. Yea, God allows the most vile and unworthy; the greatest sinners are allowed to come through Christ. And he not only allows, but encourages, and frequently invites them; yea, manifests himself as delighting in being sought to by prayer: Prov. xi. 3. "The prayer of the upright is his delight;" and in Cant. ii. 14. we have Christ saying to his spouse, "O my dove, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice." The voice of the saints in prayer is sweet unto Christ; he delights to hear it. He allows them to be earnest and importunate; yea, to the degree as to take no denial, and as it were to give him no rest, and even encouraging them to do so: Isa. lviii. 6, 7. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence and give him no rest." Thus Christ encourages us, in the parable of the importunate widow and the unjust judge, Luke xviii. So, in the parable of the man, who went to his friend at midnight, Luke xi. 5, &c.

Thus God allowed Jacob to wrestle with him, yea, to be resolute in it; "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

it is noticed with approbation, when men are violent for the kingdom of heaven, and take it by force. Thus Christ suffered the blind man to be most importunate and unceasing in his cries to him, Luke xviii. 38, 39. He continued crying, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Others who were present rebuked him, that he should hold his peace, looking upon it as too great a boldness, and an indecent behaviour towards Christ, thus to cry after him as he passed by. But Christ did not rebuke him, but stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him, saying, "What wilt thou that I should do to thee?" And when the blind man had told him, Christ graciously granted his request. The freedom of access that God gives, appears also in allowing us to come to him by prayer for every thing we need, both temporal and spiritual; whatever evil we need to be delivered from, or good we would obtain: Phil. iv. 6. "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

2. That God is eminently of this character, appears in his hearing prayer *so readily*. He often manifests his readiness to hear prayer, by giving an answer so speedily, sometimes while they are yet speaking, and sometimes before they pray, when they only have a design of praying. So ready is God to hear prayer, that he takes notice of the first purpose of praying, and sometimes bestows mercy thereupon: Isa. lxv. 24. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." We read, that when Daniel was making humble and earnest supplication, God sent an angel to comfort him, and to assure him of an answer, Dan. ix. 20—24. When God defers for the present to answer the prayer of faith, it is not from any backwardness to answer, but for the good of his people sometimes, that they may be better prepared for the mercy before they receive it, or because another time would be the best and fittest on some other account: and even then, when God seems to delay an answer, the answer is, indeed, hastened, as in Luke xviii. 7, 8. "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you, that he will avenge them speedily." Sometimes, when the blessing seems to tarry, God is even then at work to bring it about in the best time and the best manner: Hab. ii. 3. "Though it tarry, wait for it; it will come, it will not tarry."

3. That the Most High is eminently one that hears prayer, appears by his giving *so liberally* in answer to prayer: Jam. i. 5, 6. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." Men often show their backwardness to give, both by the scantiness of their gifts, and by upbraiding those who ask of them. They will be sure to put them in mind of some faults, when they give them any thing; but, on the contrary, God gives liberally, and upbraids

us not with our undeservings. He is plenteous and rich in his communications to those who call upon him: Psal. lxxxvi. 5. "For thou art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all that call upon thee;" and Rom. x. 12. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." Sometimes, God not only gives the thing asked, but he gives them more than is asked.—So he did to Solomon, 1 Kings iii. 12, 13. "Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.—And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour; so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days." Yea, God will give more to his people than they can either ask or think, as is implied in Ephes. iii. 20. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

4. That God is eminently of this character, appears by the *greatness* of the things which he hath often done in answer to prayer. Thus, when Esau was coming out against his brother Jacob, with four hundred men, without doubt fully resolved to cut him off, Jacob prayed, and God turned the heart of Esau, so that he met Jacob in a very friendly manner; Gen. xxxii. So in Egypt, at the prayer of Moses, God brought those dreadful plagues, and, at his prayer, removed them again.—When Samson was ready to perish with thirst, he prayed to God, and he brought water out of a dry jaw-bone, for his supply, Judg. xv. 18, 19. And when he prayed, after his strength was departed from him, God strengthened him, so as to pull down the temple of Dagon on the Philistines; so that those whom he slew at his death, were more than all those whom he slew in his life.—Joshua prayed to God, and said, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon; and God heard his prayer, and caused the sun and moon to stand still accordingly. The prophet "Elijah was a man of like passion" with us; "and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit;" as the apostle James observes, Jam. v. 17, 18. So God confounded the army of Zerah the Ethiopian, of a thousand thousand, in answer to the prayer of Asa, 2 Chron. xiv. 9, &c. And God sent an angel, and slew in one night an hundred and eighty-five thousand men of Sennacherib's army, in answer to Hezekiah's prayer, 2 Kings xix. 14—16. 19, 35.

5. This truth appears, in that God is, as it were, *overcome* by prayer. When God is displeased by sin, he manifests his displeasure, comes out against us in his providence, and seems to oppose and resist us; in such cases, God is, speaking after

the manner of men, overcome by humble and fervent prayer. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," Jam. v. 16. It has a great power in it; such a prayer-hearing God is the Most High, that he graciously manifests himself as conquered by it. Thus God appeared to oppose Jacob in what he sought of him; yet Jacob was resolute and overcame. Therefore God changed his name from Jacob to Israel; "for," says he, "as a prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Gen. xxxii. 28. A mighty prince indeed! Hos. xii. 4. "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto him."—When his anger was provoked against Israel, and he appeared to be ready to consume them in his hot displeasure, Moses stood in the gap, and by his humble and earnest prayer and supplication, averted the stroke of divine vengeance. Exod. xxxii. 9, &c. and Numb. xiv. 11, &c.

III. Herein the Most High God is *distinguished* from false gods. The true God is the only one of this character, there is no other of whom it may be said, that *he heareth prayer.*

Many of those things that are worshipped as gods are *idols* made by their worshippers; mere stocks and stones that know nothing. They are indeed made with ears; but they hear not the prayers of them that cry to them. They have eyes, but they see not, &c. Psal. cxv. 5, 6.—Others, though not the work of men's hands, yet are things *without life.* Thus, many worship the sun, moon and stars, which though glorious creatures, yet are not capable of knowing any thing of the wants and desires of those who pray to them.—Some worship certain kinds of *animals*, as the Egyptians were wont to worship bulls, which, though not without life, yet are destitute of that reason whereby they would be capable of knowing the requests of their worshippers. Others worship *devils* instead of the true God: 1 Cor. x. 20. "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils." These, though beings of great powers, have not knowledge necessary to capacitate them fully to understand the state, circumstances, necessities, and desires of those who pray to them. But the true God perfectly knows the circumstances of every one that prays to him throughout the world. Though millions pray to him at once, in different parts of the world, it is no more difficult for him who is infinite in knowledge, to take notice of all than of one alone. God is so perfect in knowledge, that he doth not need to be informed by us, in order to a knowledge of our wants; for he knows what things we need before we ask him. The worshippers of false gods were wont to lift their voices and cry aloud, lest their gods should fail of hearing them, as Elijah tauntingly bade the worshippers of Baal do, 1 Kings xviii. 27. But the true God

hears the silent petitions of his people. He needs not that we should cry aloud; yea, he knows and perfectly understands when we only pray in our hearts, as Hannah did, 1 Sam. i. 13.

Idols are but vanities and lies; in them is no help. As to power or knowledge, they are nothing; as the apostle says, 1 Cor. viii. 4. "An idol is nothing in the world." As to images, they are so far from having power to answer prayer, that they are not able to act: "They have hands, and handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat." They, therefore, that make them and pray to them, are senseless and sottish, and make themselves as it were stocks and stones, like unto them: Psal. cxv. 7, 8. and Jer. x. 5. "They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not; they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil; neither also is it in them to do good," As to the hosts of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, although mankind receive benefit by them, yet they act only by necessity of nature; therefore they have no power to do any thing in answer to prayers. And devils, though worshipped as gods, are not able, if they had disposition, to make those happy who worship them, and can do nothing at all but by divine permission, and as subject to the disposal of Divine providence.—When the children of Israel departed from the true God to idols, and yet cried to him in their distress, he reproved them for their folly, by bidding them cry to the gods whom they had served, for deliverance in the time of their tribulation. Josh. x. 14. So God challenges those gods themselves, Isa. xli. 23, 24. "Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods; yea, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought; an abomination is he that chooseth you."—These false gods, instead of helping those who pray to them, cannot help themselves. The devils are miserable tormented spirits; they are bound in chains of darkness for their rebellion against the true God, and cannot deliver themselves. Nor have they any more disposition to help mankind, than a parcel of hungry wolves or lions would have to protect and help a flock of lambs. And those that worship and pray to them, get not their good-will by serving them: all the reward that Satan will give them for the service which they do him, is to devour them.—I proceed now,

IV. To give the *reasons* of the doctrine; which I would do in answer to these two inquiries: first, Why God requires prayer in order to the bestowment of mercies? and secondly, Why God is so ready to hear the prayers of men?

Inq. I. Why doth God require prayer in order to the bestowment of mercies?

It is not in order that God may be *informed* of our wants or desires. He is omniscient, and with respect to his knowledge unchangeable. God never gains any knowledge by information. He knows what we want, a thousand times more perfectly than we do ourselves, before we ask him. For though, speaking after the manner of men, God is sometimes represented as if he were moved and persuaded by the prayers of his people; yet it is not to be thought that God is properly moved or made willing by our prayers; for it is no more possible that there should be any new inclination or will in God, than new knowledge. The mercy of God is not moved or drawn by any thing in the creature; but the spring of God's beneficence is within himself only; he is self-moved; and whatsoever mercy he bestows, the reason and ground of it is not to be sought for in the creature, but in God's own good pleasure. It is the will of God to bestow mercy in this way, *viz.* in answer to prayer, when he designs beforehand to bestow mercy, yea, when he has promised it; as Ezek. xxxvi. 36, 37. "I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it. Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." God has been pleased to constitute prayer to be an antecedent to the bestowment of mercy; and he is pleased to bestow mercy in consequence of prayer, as though he were prevailed on by prayer.—When the people of God are stirred up to prayer, it is the effect of his intention to show mercy; therefore he pours out the spirit of grace and supplication.

There may be two reasons given why God requires prayer in order to the bestowment of mercy; one especially respects God, and the other respects ourselves.

1. With respect to *God*, prayer is but a sensible acknowledgment of our dependence on him to his glory. As he hath made all things for his own glory, so he will be glorified and acknowledged by his creatures; and it is fit that he should require this of those who would be the subjects of his mercy. That we, when we desire to receive any mercy from him, should humbly supplicate the Divine Being for the bestowment of that mercy, is but a suitable acknowledgment of our dependence on the power and mercy of God, for that which we need, and but a suitable honour paid to the great Author and Fountain of all good.

2. With respect to *ourselves*, God requires prayer of us in order to the bestowment of mercy, because it tends to prepare us for its reception. Fervent prayer many ways tends to prepare the heart. Hereby is excited a sense of our need and of the value of the mercy which we seek, and at the same time earnest desires for it; whereby the mind is more prepared to prize it, to rejoice in it when bestowed, and to be thankful for it. Prayer, with suitable confession, may excite a sense of our unworthiness of the mercy we seek; and the placing of ourselves

in the immediate presence of God, may make us sensible of his majesty, and in a sense fit to receive mercy of him. Our prayer to God may excite in us a suitable sense and consideration of our dependence on God for the mercy we ask, and a suitable exercise of faith in God's sufficiency, that so we may be prepared to glorify his name when the mercy is received.

Inq. II. Why is God *so ready* to hear the prayers of men? —To this I answer,

1. Because he is a God of infinite grace and mercy. It is indeed a very wonderful thing, that so great a God should be so ready to hear our prayers, though we are so despicable and unworthy: that he should give free access at all times to every one; should allow us to be importunate, without esteeming it an indecent boldness; should be so rich in mercy to them that call upon him; that worms of the dust should have such power with God by prayer; that he should do such great things in answer to their prayers, and should show himself, as it were, overcome by them. This is very wonderful, when we consider the distance between God and us, and how we have provoked him by our sins, and how unworthy we are of the least gracious notice. It cannot be from any need that God stands in of us; for our goodness extendeth not to him. Neither can it be from any thing in us to incline the heart of God to us; it cannot be from any worthiness in our prayers, which are in themselves polluted things. But it is because God delights in mercy and condescension. He is herein infinitely distinguished from all other gods: he is the great fountain of all good, from whom goodness flows as light from the sun.

2. We have a glorious Mediator, who has prepared the way, that our prayers may be heard consistently with the honour of God's justice and majesty. Not only has God in himself mercy sufficient for all this, but the Mediator has provided that this mercy may be exercised consistently with the divine honour. Through him we may come to God for mercy; he is the way, the truth, and the life; no man can come to the Father but by him. This Mediator hath done three things to make way for the hearing of our prayers.

(1.) He hath by his blood made *atonement* for sin; so that our guilt need not stand in the way, as a separating wall between God and us, and that our sins might not be a cloud through which our prayers cannot pass. By his atonement he hath made the way to the throne of grace open. God would have been infinitely gracious if there had been no Mediator; but the way to the mercy-seat would have been blocked up. But Christ hath removed whatever stood in the way. The veil which was before the mercy seat "is rent from the top to the bottom," by the death of Christ. If it had not been

for this, our guilt would have remained as a wall of brass to hinder our approach. But all is removed by his blood, Heb. x. 17, &c.

(2.) Christ, by his obedience, has *purchased* this privilege, *viz.* that the prayers of those who believe in him should be heard; he has not only removed the obstacles to our prayers, but has merited a hearing of them. His merits are the incense that is offered with the prayers of the saints, which renders them a sweet savour to God, and acceptable in his sight. Hence the prayers of the saints have such power with God; hence at the prayer of a poor worm of the dust, God stopped the sun in his course for about the space of a whole day; hence Jacob as a prince had power with God, and prevailed. Our prayers would be of no account, and of no avail with God, were it not for the merits of Christ.

(3.) Christ enforces the prayers of his people, by his *intercession* at the right hand of God in heaven. He hath entered for us into the holy of holies, with the incense which he hath provided, and there he makes continual intercession for all that come to God in his name; so that their prayers come to God the Father through his hands, if I may so say; which is represented in Rev. viii. 3, 4. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand." This was typified of old by the priest's offering incense in the temple, at the time when the people were offering up their prayers to God; as Luke i. 10. "And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense."

APPLICATION.

Hence we may learn how highly we are privileged, in that we have the Most High revealed to us, who is a God that heareth prayer. The greater part of mankind are destitute of this privilege. Whatever their necessities are, whatever their calamities or sorrows, they have no prayer-hearing God to whom they may go. If they go to the gods whom they worship, and cry to them ever so earnestly, it will be in vain. They worship either lifeless things, that can neither help them; nor know that they need help; or wicked cruel spirits, who are their enemies, and wish nothing but their misery; and who, instead of helping them, are from day to day working their ruin, and watching over them, as an hungry lion watches over his prey.

How are we distinguished from them, in that we have the true God made known to us; a God of infinite grace and mercy; a God full of compassion to the miserable, who is ready to pity us under all our troubles and sorrows, to hear our cries, and to give us all the relief which we need; a God who delights in mercy, and is rich unto all that call upon him! How highly privileged are we, in that we have the holy word of this same God, to direct us how to seek for mercy! and whatever difficulties or distress we are in, we may go to him with confidence and great encouragement. What a comfort may this be to us! and what reason have we to rejoice in our privileges, to prize them so highly, and to bless God that he hath been so merciful to us, as to give us his word and reveal himself to us; and that he hath not left us to cry for help to stocks and stones, and devils, as he has left many thousands of others.

Objection. I have often prayed to God for certain mercies, and he has not heard my prayers.—To this I answer,

1. It is no argument, that God is not a prayer-hearing God, if he give not to men *what they ask* of him, to consume upon their lusts. Oftentimes when men pray for temporal good things, they desire them for no good end, but only to gratify their pride or sensuality. If they pray for worldly good things chiefly from a worldly spirit; and make an idol of the world; it is no wonder that God doth not hear their prayers; Jam. iv. 3. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts." If you request him to give you something of which you will make an idol, and set up in opposition to him —or will use as weapons of warfare against him, or as instruments to serve his enemies—no wonder that God will not hear you. If God should hear such prayers, he would act as his own enemy, inasmuch as he would bestow them to serve his enemies.

2. It is no argument, that God is not a prayer-hearing God, that he heareth not *insincere* and *unbelieving* prayers. How can we expect that he should have any respect to that which has no sincerity in it? God looketh not at words, but at the heart; and it is fit that he should do so. If men pray only in words, and not in heart, what are their prayers good for? and why should that God who searches the heart, and tries the reins, have any respect to them?—Sometimes, men do nothing but dissemble in their prayers; and when they do so, it is no argument that God is the less a prayer-hearing God, that he doth not hear such prayers; for it is no argument of want of mercy. Sometimes, they pray for that in words which they really desire not in their hearts; as that he would purge them from sin, when, at the same time, they show, by their practice, that they do not desire to be purged from sin, while they love

and choose it, and are utterly averse to parting with it. In like manner they often dissemble in pretence and show, which they make in their prayers, of dependence on God for mercies, and of a sense of his sufficiency to supply them. In our coming to God, and praying to him for such and such things, there is a show that we are sensible we are dependent on him for them, and that he is sufficient to give them to us. But men sometimes seem to pray, while not sensible of their dependence on God, nor do they think him sufficient to supply them; for all the while they trust in themselves, and have no confidence in God. They show, in words, as though they were beggars; but in heart they come as creditors, and look on God as their debtor. In words, they seem to ask for things as the fruit of free grace; but in heart they account it would be hard, unjust, and cruel, if God should deny them. In words, they seem humble and submissive, but in heart they are proud and contentious; there is no prayer but in their words.

It doth not render God at all the less a prayer-hearing God, that he distinguishes, as an all-seeing God, between real prayers and pretended ones. Such prayers as those which I have just now been mentioning, are not worthy of the name in the eyes of him who searches the heart, and sees things as they are. That prayer which is not *of faith*, is insincere; for prayer is a show, or manifestation of dependence on God, and trust in his sufficiency and mercy. Therefore, where this trust or *faith* is wanting, there is no prayer in the sight of God. And, however God is sometimes pleased to grant the requests of those who have no *faith*, yet he has not obliged himself so to do; nor is it an argument of his not being a prayer-hearing God, when he hears them not.

3. It is no argument that he is not a prayer-hearing God, that he exercises *his own wisdom* as to the time and manner of answering prayer. Some of God's people are sometimes ready to think, that he doth not hear their prayers, because he doth not answer them at the times when they expected; when, indeed, God doth hear them, and will answer them, in the time and way to which his own wisdom directs. The business of prayer is not to direct God, who is infinitely wise and needs not any of our directions; who knows what is best for us ten thousand times better than we, and knows what time and what way are best. It is fit that he should answer prayer, and, as an infinitely wise God, in the exercise of his own wisdom, and not ours. God will deal as a father with us, in answering our requests. But a child is not to expect that the father's wisdom be subject to his; nor ought he to desire it, but should esteem it a privilege, that the parent will provide for him according to his *own* wisdom.

As to particular temporal blessings, for which we pray, it is no argument that he is not a prayer-hearing God, because he bestows them not upon us: for it may be that God sees the things for which we pray not to be best for us. If so, it would be no mercy in him to bestow them upon us, but a judgment. Such things, therefore, ought always to be asked with submission to the divine will. God can answer prayer, though he bestow not the very thing for which we pray. He can sometimes better answer the lawful desires and good end we have in prayer another way. If our end be our own good and happiness, God can, perhaps, better answer that end in bestowing something else than in the bestowment of that very thing which we ask. And if the main good we aim at in our prayer be attained, our prayer is answered, though not in the bestowment of the individual thing which we sought. And so that may still be true which was before asserted, *that God always hears the prayer* OF FAITH. God never once failed of hearing a *sincere* and *believing* prayer; and those promises for ever hold good, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you; for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Another use of this doctrine may be, of reproof to those that neglect the duty of prayer. If we enjoy so great a privilege as to have the prayer-hearing God revealed to us, how great will be our folly and inexcusableness, if we neglect the privilege, or make no use of it, and deprive ourselves of the advantage by not seeking this God by prayer. They are hereby reproved who neglect the great duty of secret prayer, which is more expressly required in the word of God than any other kind. What account can those persons give of themselves, who neglect so known a duty? It is impossible that any among us should be ignorant of this command of God. How daring, therefore, is their wickedness, who live in the neglect of this duty! and what can they answer to their judge, when he shall call them to an account for it?

Here I shall briefly say something to an EXCUSE which some may be ready to make for themselves. Some may be ready to say, *If I do pray, my prayer will not be the prayer of faith, because I am in a natural condition, and have no faith.*

This excuses not from obedience to a plain command of God. The command is to all to whom the command shall come. God not only directs godly persons to pray, but others also. In the beginning of the second chapter of Proverbs, God directs all persons to cry after wisdom, and to lift up their voices for understanding, in order to their obtaining the fear and knowledge of God; and in Jam. i. 5, the apostle says, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God; and Peter directed

Simon Magus to repent, and pray to God, if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven him, Acts viii. 22. Therefore, when God says, do thus or thus, it is not for us to make excuses, but we must do the thing required. Besides,

God is pleased sometimes to answer the prayers of unbelievers. Indeed he hears not their prayers for their goodness or acceptableness, or because of any true respect to him manifested in them, for there is none; nor has he obliged himself to answer such prayers; yet he is pleased sometimes, of his sovereign mercy, to pity wicked men, and hear their cries. Thus he heard the cries of the Ninevites, Jonah iii. and the prayer of Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 27, 28. Though there be no regard to God in their prayers, yet he, of his infinite grace, is pleased to have respect to their desires of their own happiness, and to grant their requests. He may, and sometimes does, hear the cries of wicked men, as he hears the hungry ravens, when they cry, Psal. cxlvii. 9, and as he opens his bountiful hand, and satisfies the desires of every living thing, Psal. cxlv. 16. Besides, the prayers of sinners, though they have no goodness in them, yet are made a means of a preparation for mercy.

Finally, seeing we have such a prayer-hearing God as we have heard, let us be much employed in the duty of prayer: let us pray with all prayer and supplication: let us live prayerful lives, continuing instant in prayer, watching thereunto with all perseverance; praying always, without ceasing, earnestly, and not fainting.

SERMON VI.*

CHRISTIAN CAUTIONS. OR THE NECESSITY OF SELF-EXAMINATION.

PSALM CXXXIX. 23, 24.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS psalm is a meditation on the omniscience of God, or upon his perfect view and knowledge of every thing, which the Psalmist represents by that perfect knowledge which God had of all his *actions*, his downsitting and his uprising; and of his *thoughts*, so that he knew his thoughts afar off; and of his *words*, "There is not a word in my tongue," says the Psalmist, "but thou knowest it altogether." Then he represents it by the impossibility of fleeing from the divine presence, or of hiding from him; so that if he should go into heaven, or hide himself in hell, or fly to the uttermost parts of the sea; yet he would not be hid from God: or if he should endeavour to hide himself in darkness, yet that would not cover him; but the darkness and light are both alike to him. Then he represents it by the knowledge which God had of him while in his mother's womb, ver. 15, 16. "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret; thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written."

After this the Psalmist observes what must be inferred as a necessary *consequence* of this omniscience of God, viz. that he will slay the wicked, since he seeth all their wickedness, and nothing of it is hid from him. And last of all, the Psalmist improves this meditation upon God's all-seeing eye, in begging

* This Tract contains the substance of four posthumous discourses, on the text Prefixed, first printed at Edinb. 1788.

of God that he would search and try him, to see if there were any wicked way in him, and lead him in the way everlasting.

Three things may be noted in the words.

1. The act of mercy which the Psalmist implores of God towards himself, that God would search him. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts."

2. In what respect he desires to be searched, viz. "to see if there were any wicked way in him." We are not to understand by it, that the Psalmist means that God should search him for his own information. What he had said before, of God's knowing all things, implies that he hath no need of that. The Psalmist had said, in the second verse, that God understood his thought afar off; i. e. it was all plain before him, he saw it without difficulty, or without being forced to come nigh, and diligently to observe. That which is plain to be seen, may be seen at a distance.

Therefore, when the Psalmist prays that God would search him, to see if there were any wicked way in him, he cannot mean that he should search that he himself might see or be informed, but that the *Psalmist* might see and be informed. He prays that God would search him by his discovering light; that he would lead him thoroughly to discern himself, and see whether there were any wicked way in him. Such figurative expressions are often used in scripture. The word of God is said to be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Not that the word itself discerns, but it searches and opens our hearts to view; so that it enables us to discern the temper and desires of our hearts. So God is often said to *try* men. He doth not try them for his own information, but for the discovery and manifestation of them to themselves or others.

3. Observe to what end he thus desires God to search him, viz. "That he might be led in the way everlasting:" i. e. not only in a way which may have a specious show, and appear right to him for a while, and in which he may have peace and quietness for the present; but in the way which will hold, which will stand the test, which he may confidently abide by for ever, and always approve of as good and right, and in which he may always have peace and joy. It is said, that "the way of the ungodly shall perish," Psal. i. 6. In opposition to this, the way of the righteous is in the text said *to last for ever.*

SECT. I.

All men should be much concerned to know whether they do not live in some way of sin.

DAVID was much concerned to know this concerning himself; he searched himself, he examined his own heart and ways;

but he did not trust to that; he was still afraid lest there might be some wicked way in him, which had escaped his notice: therefore he cries to God to search him. And his earnestness appears in the frequent repetition of the same request in different words: *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts.* He was very earnest to know whether there were not some evil way or other in him, in which he went on, and did not take notice of.

1. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in a *state of sin.* All unregenerate men live in sin. We are born under the power and dominion of sin, are sold under sin; every unconverted sinner is a devoted servant to sin and Satan. We should look upon it as of the greatest importance to us, to know in what state we are, whether we ever had any change made in our hearts from sin to holiness, or whether we be not still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity; whether ever sin were truly mortified in us; whether we do not live in the sin of unbelief, and in the rejection of the Saviour. This is what the apostle insists upon with the Corinthians, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*" Those who entertain the opinion and hope of themselves, that they are godly, should take great care to see that their foundation be right. Those that are in doubt should not give themselves rest till the matter be resolved.

Every unconverted person lives in a *sinful way.* He not only lives in a particular evil practice, but the whole course of his life is sinful. The imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually. He not only doth evil, but he doth no good, Psal. xiv. 3. *They are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one.* Sin is an unconverted man's trade; it is the work and business of his life; for he is the servant of sin. And ordinarily hypocrites, or those who are wicked men, and yet think themselves godly, and make a profession accordingly, are especially odious and abominable to God.

2. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in *some particular way* which is offensive and displeasing to God: this is what I principally intend. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in the gratification of some *lust*, either in practice or in our thoughts: whether we do not live in the omission of some *duty*, some thing which God expects we should do; whether we do not go into some practice or manner of behaviour, which is not *warrantable.* We should inquire whether we do not live in some practice which is against our light, and whether we do not allow ourselves in *known* sins.

We should be strict to inquire whether or no we have not hitherto allowed ourselves in some or other sinful way, through wrong principles and *mistaken notions* of our duty; whether we have not lived in the practice of some things offensive to God, through want of *care*, and watchfulness, and observation of ourselves. We should be concerned to know whether we live not in some way which doth not become the *profession* we make; and whether our practice in some things be not *unbecoming Christians*, contrary to Christian rules, not suitable for the disciples and followers of the Holy Jesus, the Lamb of God. We ought to be concerned to know this, because,

(1.) God requires of us, that we exercise the utmost *watchfulness* and diligence in his service. *Reason* teaches that it is our duty to exercise the utmost care, that we may know the mind and will of God, and our duty in all the branches of it, and to use our utmost diligence in every thing to do it; because the service of God is the great business of our lives; it is that work which is the end of our beings; and God is worthy that we should serve him to the utmost of our power in all things. This is what *God* often expressly requires of us; Deut. iv. 9. *Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things that thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life.* And v. 15, 16. *Take ye therefore good heed to yourselves, lest ye corrupt yourselves.* And Deut. vi. 17. *You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes which he hath commanded thee.* And Prov. iv. 23. *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.* So we are commanded by Christ to *watch and pray;* Matt. xxvi. 41, and Luke xxi. 34, 36. *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life.* Eph. v. 15. *See that ye walk circumspectly.* So that if we be found in any evil way whatsoever, it will not excuse us, that it was through inadvertence, or that we were not aware of it; as long as it is through want of that care and watchfulness in us, which we ought to have maintained.

(2.) If we live in any way of sin, we live in a way whereby God is *dishonoured;* but the honour of God ought to be supremely regarded by all. If every one would make it his great care in all things to obey God, to live justly and holily, to walk in every thing according to Christian rules; and would maintain a strict, watchful, and scrutinous eye over himself, to see if there were no wicked way in him; would give diligence to amend whatsoever is amiss; would avoid every unholy, unchristian, and sinful way; and if the practice of all were universally as becometh Christians, how greatly would this be to the glory of God, and of Jesus Christ! How greatly would it be to the credit and honour of religion! How would it tend to

excite a high esteem of religion in spectators, and to recommend a holy life! How would it stop the mouths of objectors and opposers! How beautiful and amiable would religion then appear, when exemplified in the lives of Christians, not maimed and mutilated, but whole and entire, as it were in its true shape, having all its parts and its proper beauty! Religion would then appear to be an amiable thing indeed.

If those who call themselves Christians, thus walked in all the paths of virtue and holiness, it would tend more to the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the world, the conviction of sinners, and the propagation of religion among unbelievers, than all the sermons in the world, so long as the lives of those who are called Christians, continue as they are now. For want of this *concern* and *watchfulness* in the degree in which it ought to take place, many truly godly persons adorn not their profession as they ought to do, and, on the contrary, in some things dishonour it. For want of being so much concerned as they ought to be, to know whether they do not walk in some way that is unbecoming a Christian, and offensive to God; their behaviour in some things is very unlovely, and such as is an offence and stumbling-block to others, and gives occasion to the enemy to blaspheme.

(3.) We should be much concerned to know whether we do not live in some way of sin, as we would regard our own *interest*. If we live in any way of sin, it will be exceedingly to our hurt. Sin, as it is the most hateful evil, is that which is most prejudicial to our interest, and tends most to our hurt of any thing in the world. If we live in any way that is displeasing to God, it may be the ruin of our souls. Though men reform all other wicked practices, yet if they live in but one sinful way, which they do not forsake, it may prove their everlasting undoing.

If we live in any way of sin, we shall thereby *provoke God* to anger, and bring guilt upon our own souls. Neither will it excuse us, that we were not sensible how evil that way was in which we walked; that we did not consider it; that we were blind as to any evil in it. We contract guilt not only by living in those ways which we know, but in those which we *might* know to be sinful, if we were but sufficiently concerned to know what is sinful and what not, and to examine ourselves, and search our own hearts and ways. If we walk in some evil way, and know it not for want of watchfulness and consideration, that will not excuse us; for we ought to have watched and considered, and made the most diligent inquiry.

If we walk in some evil way, it will be a great prejudice to us in *this world*. We shall thereby be deprived of that comfort which we otherwise might enjoy, and shall expose ourselves to a great deal of soul trouble, and sorrow, and darkness, which

otherwise we might have been free from. A wicked way is the original way of pain or grief. In it we shall expose ourselves to the judgments of God, even in this world; and we shall be great losers by it, in respect to our *eternal interest;* and that though we may not live in a way of sin wilfully, and with a deliberate resolution, but carelessly, and through the deceitfulness of our corruptions. However we shall offend God, and prevent the flourishing of grace in our hearts, if not the very being of it.

Many are very careful that they do not proceed in mistakes, where their temporal interest is concerned. They will be strictly careful that they be not led on blindfold in the bargains which they make; in their traffic one with another, they are careful to have their eyes about them, and to see that they go safely in these cases; and why not, where the interest of their souls is concerned?

(4.) We should be much concerned to know whether we do not live in some way of sin, because we are exceedingly *prone* to walk in some such way.—The heart of man is naturally prone to sin; the weight of the soul is naturally that way, as the stone by its weight tendeth downwards. And there is very much of a remaining proneness to sin in the saints. Though sin be mortified in them, yet there is a body of sin and death remaining; there are all manner of lusts and corrupt inclinations. We are exceeding apt to get into some ill path or other. Man is so prone to sinful ways, that without maintaining a constant strict watch over himself, no other can be expected, than that he will walk in some way of sin.

Our hearts are so full of sin, that they are ready to betray us. That to which men are prone, they are apt to get into before they are aware. Sin is apt to steal in upon us unawares. Besides this, we live in a world where we continually meet with temptations; we walk in the midst of snares; and the devil, a subtle adversary, is continually watching over us, endeavouring, by all manner of wiles and devices, to lead us astray into by-paths. 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. *I am jealous over you. I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety; so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.* 1 Pet. v. 8. *Be sober; be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*—These things should make us the more jealous of ourselves.

(5.) We ought to be concerned to know whether we do not live in some way of sin; because there are many who live in such ways, and do not *consider* it, or are not sensible of it. It is a thing of great importance that we should know it, and yet the knowledge is not to be acquired without difficulty. Many live in ways which are offensive to God, who are not sensible of it. They are strangely blinded in this case. Psal. xix. 12. *Who*

can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. By secret faults, the Psalmist means those which are secret to himself, those sins which were in him, or which he was guilty of, and yet was not aware of.

SECT. II.

Why many live in sin, and yet not know it.

That the knowing whether we do not live in some way of sin is attended with difficulty, is not because the rules of judging in such a case are not plain or plentiful. God hath abundantly taught us what we ought, and what we ought not to do; and the rules by which we are to walk are often set before us in the preaching of the word. So that the difficulty of knowing whether there be any wicked way in us, is not for want of external light, or for want of God's having told us plainly and abundantly what are wicked ways. But that many persons live in ways which are displeasing to God, and yet are not sensible of it, may arise from the following things.

1. From the blinding *deceitful nature of sin.* The heart of man is full of sin and corruption, and that corruption is of an exceedingly darkening, blinding nature. Sin always carries a degree of darkness with it; and the more it prevails, the more it darkens and deludes the mind.—It is from hence that the knowing whether there be any wicked way in us is a difficult thing. The difficulty is not at all for want of light without us, not at all because the word of God is not plain, or the rules not clear; but it is because of the darkness within us. The light shines clear enough around us, but the fault is in our eyes; they are darkened and blinded by a pernicious distemper.

Sin is of a deceitful nature, because, so far as it prevails, so far it gains the *inclination* and will, and that sways and biases the judgment. So far as any lust prevails, so far it biases the mind to approve of it. So far as any sin sways the inclination or will, so far that sin seems pleasing and good to the man: and that which is pleasing, the mind is prejudiced to think is right.—Hence when any lust hath so gained upon a man, as to get him into a sinful way or practice; it having gained his will, also prejudices his understanding. And the more irregularly a man walks, the more will his mind probably be darkened and blinded; because by so much the more doth sin prevail.

Hence many men who live in ways which are not agreeable to the rules of God's word, yet are not *sensible* of it; and it is a difficult thing to make them so; because the same lust that leads them into that evil way, blinds them in it.—Thus, if a man live in a way of malice or envy, the more malice or

envy prevails, the more will it blind his understanding to approve of it. The more a man hates his neighbour, the more will he be disposed to think, that he has just cause to hate him, and that his neighbour is hateful, and deserves to be hated, and that it is not his duty to love him. So if a man live in any way of lasciviousness, the more his impure lust prevails, the more sweet and pleasant will it make the sin appear, and so the more will he be disposed and prejudiced to think there is no evil in it.

So the more a man lives in a way of covetousness, or the more inordinately he desires the profits of the world, the more will he think himself excusable in so doing, and the more will he think that he has a necessity of those things, and cannot do without them. And if they be necessary, then he is excusable for eagerly desiring them. The same might be shown of all the lusts which are in men's hearts. By how much the more they prevail, by so much the more do they blind the mind, and dispose the judgment to approve of them. All lusts are deceitful lusts. Eph. iv. 22. *That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.* And even godly men may for a time be blinded and deluded by a lust, so far as to live in a way which is displeasing to God.

The lusts of men's hearts—prejudicing them in favour of sinful practices, to which those lusts tend, and in which they delight—stir up *carnal reason*, and put men, with all the subtlety of which they are capable, to invent pleas and arguments to justify such practices. When men are very strongly inclined and tempted to any wicked practice, and conscience troubles them about it, they will rack their brains to find out arguments to stop the mouth of conscience, and to make themselves believe that they may lawfully proceed in that practice.

When men have entered upon an ill practice, and proceeded in it, then their *self-love* prejudices them to approve of it. Men do not love to condemn themselves; they are prejudiced in their own favour, and in favour of whatever is found in themselves. Hence they will find out good names, by which to call their evil dispositions and practices; they will make them virtuous, or at least will make them innocent. Their covetousness they will call prudence and diligence in business. If they rejoice at another's calamity, they pretend it is because they hope it will do him good, and will humble him. If they indulge in excessive drinking, it is because their constitutions require it. If they talk against and backbite their neighbour, they call it zeal against sin; it is because they would bear a testimony against such wickedness. If they set up their wills to oppose others in public affairs, then they call their wilfulness conscience, or respect to the public good—Thus they find good names for all their evil ways.

Men are very apt to bring their principles to their practices, and not their practices to their principles, as they ought to do. They, in their practice, comply not with their consciences; but all their strife is to bring their consciences to comply with their practice.

On the account of this deceitfulness of sin, and because we have so much sin dwelling in our hearts, it is a difficult thing to pass a true judgment on our own ways and practices. On this account we should make diligent search, and be much concerned to know whether there be not some wicked way in us. Heb. iii. 12, 13. *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

Men can more easily see faults in others then they can in themselves. When they see others out of the way, they will presently condemn them, when perhaps they do, or have done the same, or the like themselves, and in themselves justify it. Men can discern motes in others' eyes, better than they can beams in their own. Prov. xxi. 2. *Every way of man is right in his own eyes.* The heart in this matter is exceedingly deceitful. Jer. xvii. 9. *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: Who can know it?* We ought not therefore to trust in our own hearts in this matter, but to keep a jealous eye on ourselves, to pry into our own hearts and ways, and to cry to God that he would search us, Prov. xxviii. 26. *He that trusteth his own heart is a fool.*

2. *Satan* also sets in with our deceitful lusts, and labours to blind us in this matter. He is continually endeavouring to lead us into sinful ways, and sets in with carnal reason to flatter us in such ways, and to blind the conscience. He is the prince of darkness; he labours to blind and deceive; it hath been his work ever since he began it with our first parents.

3. Sometimes men are not sensible, because they are *stupified through custom.* Custom in an evil practice *stupifies* the mind, so that it makes any way of sin, which at first was offensive to conscience, after a while, to seem harmless.

4. Sometimes persons live in ways of sin, and are not sensible of it, because they are *blinded* by common custom, and the *examples of others.* There are so many who go into the practice, and it is so common a custom, that it is esteemed little or no discredit to a man; it is little testified against. This causes some things to appear innocent, which are very displeasing to God, and abominable in his sight. Perhaps we see them practised by those of whom we have a high esteem, by our superiors, and those who are accounted wise men. This greatly prepossesses the mind in favour of them, and takes off the sense of their evil. Or if they be observed to be commonly

practised by those who are accounted godly men, men of experience in religion, this tends greatly to harden the heart, and blind the mind with respect to any evil practice.

5. Persons are in great danger of living in ways of sin and not being sensible of it, for want of duly regarding and considering their duty in the *full extent* of it. There are some who hear of the necessity of reforming from all sins, and attending all duties, and will set themselves to perform some particular duties, at the same time neglecting others. Perhaps their thoughts will be wholly taken up about religious duties, such as prayer in secret, reading the scriptures, and other good books, going to public worship, and giving diligent attention, keeping the Sabbath, and serious meditation. They seem to regard these things, as though they comprised their duty in its full extent, and as if this were their whole work; and moral duties towards their neighbours, their duties in the relations in which they stand, their duties as husbands or wives, as brethren or sisters, or their duties as neighbours, seem not to be considered by them.

They consider not the *necessity* of those things: and when they hear of earnestly seeking salvation in a way of diligent attendance on all duties, they seem to leave those out of their thoughts, as if they were not meant; nor any other duties, except reading and praying, and keeping the Sabbath, and the like. Or, if they do regard some parts of their moral duty, it may be other branches of it are not considered. Thus, if they be just in their dealings, yet, perhaps, they neglect deeds of charity. They know they must not defraud their neighbour; they must not lie; they must not commit uncleanness; but seem not to consider what an evil it is to talk against others lightly, or to take up a reproach against them, or to contend and quarrel with them, or to live contrary to the rules of the gospel in their family relations, or not to instruct their children or servants.

Many men seem to be very conscientious in some things, in some branches of their duty on which they keep their eye, when other important branches are entirely neglected, and seem not to be noticed by them. They regard not their duty in the full extent of it.

SECT. III.

What method we ought to take, in order to find out whether we do not live in some way of sin.

This, as hath been observed, is a difficult thing to be known; but it is not a matter of so much difficulty, but that, if persons were sufficiently concerned about it, and strict and

thorough in inquiring and searching, it might, for the most part, be discovered; men might know whether they live in any way of sin, or not. Persons who are deeply concerned to please and obey God, need not, under the light we enjoy, go on in the ways of sin through ignorance.

It is true, that our hearts are exceedingly deceitful; but God, in his holy word, hath given that light with respect to our duty, which is accommodated to the state of darkness in which we are. So that, by thorough care and inquiry, we may know our duty, and know whether or no we live in any sinful way. And every one who hath any true love to God and his duty, will be glad of assistance in this inquiry. It is with such persons a concern which lies with much weight upon their spirits, in all things to walk as God would have them, and so as to please and honour him. If they live in any way which is offensive to God, they will be glad to know it, and do by no means choose to have it concealed from them.

All those, also, who, in good earnest, make the inquiry, *What shall I do to be saved?* will be glad to know whether they do not live in some sinful way of behaviour. For, if they live in any such way, it is a great disadvantage to them with respect to that great concern. It behoves every one who is seeking salvation, to know and avoid every sinful way in which he lives. The means by which we must come to the knowledge of this, are two; viz. the knowledge of the rule, and the knowledge of ourselves.

1*st*. If we would know whether we do not live in some way of sin, we should take a great deal of pains to be thoroughly *acquainted with the rule*.—God hath given us a true and perfect rule by which we ought to walk. And that we might be able, notwithstanding our darkness, and the disadvantages which attend us, to know our duty; he hath laid the rule before us abundantly. What a full and abundant revelation of the mind of God have we in the scriptures! And how plain is it in what relates to practice! How often are rules repeated! In how many various forms are they revealed, that we might the more fully understand them!

But to what purpose will all this care of God to inform us be, if we neglect the *revelation* which God hath made of his mind, and take no care to become acquainted with it? It is impossible that we should know whether we do not live in a way of sin, unless we know the rule by which we are to walk. The sinfulness of any way consists in its disagreement from the rule; and we cannot know whether it agree with the rule or not, unless we be acquainted with the rule. Rom. iii. 20. *By the law is the knowledge of sin.*

Therefore, lest we go in ways displeasing to God, we ought with the greatest diligence to study the rules which God hath

given us. We ought to read and search the Holy Scriptures much, and do it with the design to know the whole of our duty, and in order that the word of God may be *a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths.* Psal. cxix. 105. Every one ought to strive to get knowledge in divine things, and to grow in such knowledge, to the end that he may know his duty, and know what God would have him to do.

These things being so, are not the greater part of men very much to blame in that they take no more pains or care to acquire the knowledge of divine things? in that they no more study the Holy Scriptures, and other books which might inform them? as if it were the work of ministers only, to take pains to acquire this knowledge. But why is it so much a minister's work to strive after knowledge, unless it be, that others may acquire knowledge by him?—Will not many be found inexcusable in the sinful ways in which they live through ignorance and mistake, because their ignorance is a wilful, allowed ignorance? They are ignorant of their duty, but it is their own fault they are so; they have advantages enough to know, and may know it if they will: but they take pains to acquire knowledge, and to be well skilled in their outward affairs, upon which their temporal interest depends; but will not take pains to know their duty.

We ought to take great pains to be well informed, especially in those things which immediately concern us, or which relate to our particular cases.

2*dly*, The other mean is the *knowledge of ourselves*, as subject to the rule.—If we would know whether we do not live in some way of sin, we should take the utmost care to be well acquainted with ourselves, as well as with the rule, that we may be able to compare ourselves with the rule. When we have found what the rule is, then we should be strict in examining ourselves, whether or no we be conformed to the rule. This is the direct way in which our characters are to be discovered. It is one thing wherein man differs from brute creatures, that he is capable of self-reflection, or of reflecting upon his own actions, and what passes in his own mind, and considering the nature and quality of them. And doubtless it was partly for this end that God gave us this power, which is denied to other creatures, that we might know ourselves, and consider our own ways.

We should examine our hearts and ways, until we have satisfactorily discovered either their agreement or disagreement with the rules of scripture. This is a matter that requires the utmost diligence, lest we overlook our own irregularities, lest some evil way in us should lie hid under disguise, and pass unobserved. One would think we are under greater

advantages to be acquainted with ourselves, than with any thing else; for we are always present with ourselves, and have an immediate consciousness of our own actions; all that passeth in us, or is done by us, is immediately under our eye. Yet really in some respects the knowledge of nothing is so difficult to be obtained, as the knowledge of ourselves. We should therefore use great diligence in prying into the secrets of our hearts, and in examining all our ways and practices. That you may the more successfully use those means to know whether you do not live in some way of sin; be advised,

1. Evermore to join *self-reflection* with reading and hearing the word of God. When you read or hear, reflect on yourselves as you go along, comparing yourselves and your own ways with what you read or hear. Reflect and consider what agreement or disagreement there is between the word and your ways. The Scriptures testify against all manner of sin, and contain directions for every duty; as the apostle saith, 2 Tim. iii. 16. *And is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* Therefore when you there read the rules given us by Christ and his apostles, reflect and consider, each one of you with himself, Do I live according to this rule? Or do I live in any respect contrary to it?

When you read in the historical parts of Scripture an account of the sins of which others have been guilty, reflect on yourselves as you go along, and inquire whether you do not in some degree live in the same or like practices. When you there read accounts how God reproved the sins of others, and executed judgments upon them for their sins, examine whether you be not guilty of things of the same nature. When you read the examples of Christ, and of the saints recorded in scripture, inquire whether you do not live in ways contrary to those examples. When you read there how God commended and rewarded any persons for their virtues and good deeds, inquire whether you perform those duties for which they were commended and rewarded, or whether you do not live in the contrary sins or vices. Let me further direct you, particularly to read the scriptures to these ends, that you may compare and examine yourselves in the manner now mentioned.

So if you would know whether you do not live in some way of sin, whenever you hear any sin testified against, or any duty urged, in the preaching of the word, be careful to look back upon yourselves, to compare yourselves and your own ways with what you hear, and strictly examine yourselves, whether you live in this or the other sinful way which you hear testified against: and whether you do this duty which you hear urged. Make use of the word as a glass, wherein you may behold yourselves.

How few are there who do this as they ought to do! who, while the minister is testifying against sin, are busy with themselves in examining their own hearts and ways! The generality rather think of others, how this or that person lives in a manner contrary to what is preached; so that there may be hundreds of things delivered in the preaching of the word, which properly belong to them, and are well suited to their cases; yet it never so much as comes into their minds, that what is delivered any way concerns them. Their minds readily fix upon others, and they can charge them, but never think whether or no they themselves be the persons.

2. If you live in any ways which are *generally condemned by the better*, and more sober *sort of men*, be especially careful to inquire concerning these, whether they be not ways of sin. Perhaps you have argued with yourselves, that such or such a practice is lawful; you cannot see any evil in it. However, if it be generally condemned by godly ministers, and the better and more pious sort of people, it certainly looks suspicious, whether or no there be not some evil in it; so that you may well be put upon inquiring with the utmost strictness, whether it be not sinful. The practice being so generally disapproved of by those who in such cases are most likely to be in the right, may reasonably put you upon more than ordinarily nice and diligent inquiry concerning the lawfulness or unlawfulness of it.

3. Examine yourselves, whether all the ways in which you live are likely to be *pleasant to think of upon a death-bed*. Persons often in health allow and plead for those things which they would not dare to do, if they looked upon themselves as shortly about to go out of the world. They in a great measure still their consciences, as to ways in which they walk, and keep them pretty easy, while death is thought of as at a distance: yet reflections on these same ways are very uncomfortable when they are going out of the world. Conscience is not so easily blinded and muffled then as at other times.

Consider therefore, and inquire diligently, whether or no you do not live in some practice or other, as to the lawfulness of which, when it shall come into your minds upon your death-bed, you will choose to have some farther satisfaction, and some better argument than you now have, to prove that it is not sinful, in order to your being easy about it. Think over your particular ways, and try yourselves, with the awful expectation of soon going out of the world into eternity; and earnestly endeavour impartially to judge what ways you will on a death-bed approve of and rejoice in, and what you will disapprove of, and wish you had let alone.

4. Be advised to consider *what others say of you*, and improve it to this end, to know whether you do not live in some way of sin. Although men are blind to their own faults, yet

they easily discover the faults of others, and are apt enough to speak of them. Sometimes persons live in ways which do not at all become them, yet are blind to it themselves, not seeing the deformity of their own ways, while it is most plain and evident to others. They themselves cannot see it, yet others cannot shut their eyes against it, cannot avoid seeing it.

For instance. Some persons are of a very *proud* behaviour, and are not sensible of it; but it appears notorious to others. Some are of a very *worldly* spirit; they are set after the world, so as to be noted for it, so as to have a name for it; yet they seem not to be sensible of it themselves. Some are of a very *malicious* and *envious* spirit; and others see it, and to them it appears very hateful; yet they themselves do not reflect upon it. Therefore since there is no trusting to our own hearts and our own eyes in such cases, we should make our improvement of what others say of us, observe what they charge us with, and what fault they find with us, and strictly examine whether there be not foundation for it.

If others charge us with being proud; or worldly, close, and niggardly; or spiteful and malicious; or with any other ill temper or practice; we should improve it in self-reflection, to inquire whether it be not so. And though the imputation may seem to us to be very groundless, and we think that they, in charging us so and so, are influenced by no good spirit; yet if we act prudently, we shall take so much notice of it as to make it an occasion of examining ourselves.

Thus we should improve what our *friends* say to us and of us, when they from friendship tell us of any thing which they observe amiss in us. It is most imprudent, as well as most unchristian, to take it amiss, and resent it, when we are thus told of our faults; we should rather rejoice in it, that we are shown our spots. Thus also we should improve what our *enemies* say of us. If they from an ill spirit reproach and revile us to our faces, we should consider it, so far as to reflect inward upon ourselves, and inquire whether it be not so, as they charge us. For though what is said, be said in a reproachful, reviling manner; yet there may be too much truth in it. When men revile others, even from an ill spirit towards them, yet they are likely to fix upon real faults; they are likely to fall upon us where we are weakest and most defective, and where we have given them most occasion. An enemy will soonest attack us where we can least defend ourselves; and a man that reviles us, though he do it from an unchristian spirit, and in an unchristian manner, yet will be most likely to speak of that for which we are really most to blame, and are most blamed by others.

So when we hear of others talking against us behind our backs, though they do very ill in so doing, yet the right improvement of it will be, to *reflect upon ourselves*, and consider whe-

ther we indeed have not those faults which they lay to our charge. This will be a more Christian and a more wise improvement of it, than to be in a rage, to revile again, and to entertain an ill will towards them for their evil-speaking. This is the most wise and prudent improvement of such things. Hereby we may get good out of evil; and this is the surest way to defeat the designs of our enemies in reviling and backbiting us. They do it from ill will, and to do us an injury; but in this way we may turn it to our own good.

5. Be advised, *when you see others' faults*, to examine whether there be not the *same* in yourselves. This is not done by many, as is evident from this, that they are so ready to speak of others' faults and aggravate them, when they have the very same themselves. Thus, nothing is more common than for proud men to accuse others of pride, and to declaim against them upon that account. So it is common for dishonest men to complain of being wronged by others. When a person seeth ill dispositions and practices in others, he is not under the same disadvantage in seeing their odiousness and deformity, as when he looks upon any ill disposition or practice in himself. He can see how odious these and those things are in others; he can easily see what a hateful thing pride is in another; and so of malice, and other evil dispositions or practices. In others he can easily see their deformity; for he doth not look through such a deceitful glass, as when he sees the same things in himself.

Therefore, when you see others' faults; when you take notice how such an one acts amiss, what an ill spirit he shows, and how unsuitable his behaviour is; when you hear others speak of it, and when you yourselves find fault with others in their dealings with you, or in things wherein you are any way concerned with them; then reflect, and consider, whether there be nothing of the same nature in yourselves. Consider that these things are just as deformed and hateful in you as they are in others. Pride, a haughty spirit and carriage, are as odious in you as they are in your neighbour. Your malicious and revengeful spirit towards your neighbour, is just as hateful as a malicious and revengeful spirit in him towards you. It is as unreasonable for you to wrong, and to be dishonest with your neighbour, as it is for him to wrong, and be dishonest with you. It is as injurious and unchristian for you to talk against others behind their backs, as it is for others to do the same with respect to you.

6. Consider the ways in which *others are blinded* as to the sins in which they live, and strictly inquire whether *you* be not blinded in the same ways. You are sensible that others are blinded by their lusts; consider whether the prevalence of some carnal appetite or lust of the mind have not blinded you. You see how others are blinded by their temporal interest; inquire whether your temporal interests do not blind you also in some

things, so as to make you allow yourselves in things which are not right. You are as liable to be blinded through inclination and interest, and have the same deceitful and wicked hearts as other men: Prov. xxvii. 19. *As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.*

SECT. IV.

Particular subjects of Self-examination—The Lord's day—God's house.

I desire all those would strictly examine themselves in the following particulars, who are concerned not to live in any way of sin, as I hope there are a considerable number of such now present; and this certainly will be the case with all who are godly, and all who are duly concerned for their own salvation.

1. Examine yourselves with respect to the *Sabbath day*, whether you do not live in some way of breaking or profaning God's holy Sabbath. Do you strictly in all things keep this day, as sacred to God, in governing your thoughts, words, and actions, as the word of God requires on this holy day? Inquire whether you do not only fail in *particulars*, but whether you do not live in some *way* whereby this day is profaned; and particularly inquire concerning three things.

(1.) Whether it be not a frequent thing with you to *encroach upon the Sabbath at its beginning*,* and after the Sabbath is begun, to be out at your work, or following that worldly business which is proper to be done only in our own time. If this be a thing in which you allow yourselves, you live in a way of sin; for it is a thing which can by no means be justified.—You have no more warrant to be out with your team, or to be cutting wood, or doing any other worldly business, immediately after the Sabbath is begun, than you have to do it in the middle of the day. The time is as holy near the beginning of the Sabbath as it is in the middle; it is the whole that we are to rest, and to keep holy, and devote to God; we have no licence to take any part of it to ourselves.

When men often thus *encroach* upon the Sabbath, it cannot be from any necessity which can justify them: it can only be for want of due care, and due regard to holy time. They can, with due care, get their work finished, so that they can leave it by a certain hour. This is evident, for when they are under a natural necessity of finishing their work by a certain time, then

* It may be necessary here to inform some readers, that it was the sentiment of the author, as well as of the country in general where he lived, that the Sabbath begins with the evening preceding the day, and is to be *celebrated from evening to evening*, Lev. xxiii. 32.

they do take that care as to have done before that time comes: As, for instance, when they are aware that at such a time it will be dark, and they will not be able to follow their work any longer, but will be under a natural necessity of leaving off; why, then, they will and do take care ordinarily to have finished their work before that time; and this, although the darkness sometimes begins sooner, and sometimes later.

This shows, that, with due care, men can, ordinarily, have done their work by a limited time. If proper care will finish their work by a limited time when they are under a natural necessity of it, the same care would as well finish it by a certain time when we are only under a moral necessity. If men knew that as soon as ever the Sabbath should begin, it would be perfectly dark, so that they would be under a natural necessity of leaving off their work abroad by that time, then we should see that they would generally have their work done before the time. This shows, that it is only for want of care, and of regard to the holy command of God, that men so frequently have some of their work abroad to do after the Sabbath is begun.

Nehemiah took great care that no burden should be borne after the beginning of the Sabbath, Nehem. xiii. 19. *And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath*, i. e. began to be darkened by the shade of the mountains before sun-set, *I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath; and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should be no burden brought in on the Sabbath-day.*

(2.) Examine whether it be not your manner to *talk on the Sabbath* of things *unsuitable* for holy time. If you do not move such talk yourselves, yet when you fall into company that sets you the example, are you not wont to join in diverting talk, or in talk of worldly affairs, quite wide from any relation to the business of the day? There is as much reason that you should keep the Sabbath holy with your tongues, as with your hands. If it be unsuitable for you to employ your *hands* about common and worldly things, why is it not as unsuitable for you to employ your tongues about them?

(3.) Inquire whether it be not your manner to *loiter away the time* of the Sabbath, and to spend it in a great measure in idleness, in doing nothing. Do you not spend more time on Sabbath-day, than on other days, on your beds, or otherwise idling away the time, not improving it as a precious opportunity of seeking God, and your own salvation?

2. Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin, with respect to the *institutions of God's house*. Here I shall mention several instances.

(1.) Do you not wholly neglect some of those institutions, as particularly the *sacrament of the Lord's Supper?* Perhaps

you pretend scruples of conscience, that you are not fit to come to that ordinance, and question whether you be commanded to come. But are your scruples the result of a serious and careful inquiry? Are they not rather a cloak for your own negligence, indolence, and thoughtlessness concerning your duty? Are you satisfied, have you thoroughly inquired and looked into this matter? If not, do you not live in sin, in that you do not more thoroughly inquire? Are you excusable in neglecting a positive institution, when you are scrupulous about your duty, and yet do not thoroughly inquire what it is?

But be it so, that you are *unprepared;* is not this your own sin, your own fault? and can sin excuse you from attending on a positive institution of Christ? When persons are like to have children to be baptised, they can be convinced that it is their duty to come. If it be only conscience that detained them, why doth it not detain them as well now as heretofore? or, if they now be more thorough in their inquiries concerning their duty, ought they not to have been thorough in their inquiries before as well as now?

(2.) Do you not live in sin, in living in the neglect of *singing God's praises?* If singing praise to God, be an ordinance of God's public worship, as doubtless it is, then it ought to be performed by the whole worshipping assembly. If it be a command that we should worship God in this way, then all ought to obey this command, not only by joining with others in singing, but in singing themselves. For if we suppose it answers the command of God for us only to join in our hearts with others, it will run us into this absurdity, that *all* may do so; and then there would be none to sing, none for others to join with.

If it be an appointment of God, that Christian congregations should sing praises to him, then, doubtless, it is the duty of *all;* if there be no exception in the rule, then all ought to comply with it, unless they be incapable of it, or unless it would be an hinderance to the other work of God's house, as the case may be with ministers, who, sometimes, may be in great need of that respite and intermission after public prayers, to recover their breath and strength, so that they may be fit to speak the word. But if persons be now not capable, because they know not how to sing, that doth not excuse them, unless they have been incapable of learning. As it is the command of God, that all should sing, so all should make conscience of learning to sing, as it is a thing which cannot be decently performed at all without learning. Those, therefore, who neglect to learn to sing, live in sin, as they neglect what is necessary in order to their attending one of the ordinances of God's worship. Not only should persons make conscience of learning to sing themselves, but parents should conscientiously see to it, that

their children are taught this among other things, as their education and instruction belongs to them.

(3.) Are you not guilty of allowing yourselves in sin, in neglecting to do your part towards the *removal of scandals* from among us? All persons that are in the church, and the children of the church, are under the watch of the church; and it is one of those duties to which we are bound by the covenant which we either actually or virtually make, in uniting ourselves to a particular church, that we will watch over our brethren, and do our part to uphold the ordinances of God in their purity. This is the end of the institution of particular churches, viz. the maintaining of the ordinances of divine worship there, in the manner which God hath appointed.

Examine whether you have not allowed yourselves in sin with respect to this matter, through fear of offending your neighbours. Have you not allowedly neglected the proper steps for removing scandals, when you have seen them; the steps of reproving them privately, where the case would allow of it, and of telling them to the church, where the case required it? Instead of watching over your brother, have you not rather hid yourselves, that ye might not be witnesses against him? and when you have seen scandal in him, have you not avoided the taking of proper steps according to the case?

(4.) Art not thou one whose manner it is, to come *late to the public worship of God*, and especially in *winter*, when the weather is cold? and dost thou not live in sin in so doing? Consider whether it be a way which can be justified; whether it be a practice which doth honour to God and religion; whether it have not the appearance of setting light by the public worship and ordinances of God's house. Doth it not show, that thou dost not prize such opportunities, and that thou art willing to have as little of them as thou canst? Is it not a disorderly practice? and if all should do as thou dost, what confusion would it occasion?

(5.) Art thou not one whose manner it commonly is to *sleep in the time of public service?* and is not this to live in a way of sin? Consider the matter rationally; is it a thing to be justified, for thee to lay thyself down to sleep, while thou art present in the time of divine service, and pretendest to be one of the worshipping assembly, and to be hearing a message from God? Would it not be looked upon as an high affront, an odious behaviour, if thou shouldst do so in the presence of a king, while a message was delivering to thee, in his name, by one of his servants? Canst thou put a greater contempt on the message which the King of kings sendeth to thee, concerning things of the greatest importance, than from time to time to lay thyself down, and compose thyself to sleep, while the messenger is delivering his message to thee?

(6.) Art thou not one who is *not careful to keep his mind intent* upon what is said and done in public worship? Dost thou not, in the midst of the most solemn acts of worship, suffer thy thoughts to rove after worldly objects, worldly cares and concerns, or perhaps the objects of thy wicked lusts and desires? and dost thou not herein live in a way of sin?

SECT. V.

Self-examination concerning secret sins.

I shall now propose to you to examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some secret sin; whether you do not live in the neglect of some secret duty, or secretly live in some practice which is offensive to the pure and all-seeing eye of God. Here you should examine yourselves concerning all secret duties, as reading, meditation, secret prayer; whether you attend those at all, or if you do, whether you do not attend them in an unsteady and careless manner. You should also examine yourselves concerning all secret sins. Strictly inquire what your behaviour is, when you are hid from the eye of the world, when you are under no other restraints than those of conscience, when you are not afraid of the eye of man, and have nothing to fear but the all-seeing eye of God.—Here, among many other things which might be mentioned, I shall particularly mention two.

(1.) Inquire whether you do not live in the neglect of the duty of *reading the holy scriptures*. The holy scriptures were surely written to be read; and unless we be *Popish* in our principles, we shall maintain, that they were not only given to be read by ministers, but by the people too. It doth not answer the design for which they were given, that we have once read them, and that we once in a great while read something in them. They were given to be always with us, to be continually conversed with, as a rule of life. As the artificer must always have his rule with him in his work; and the blind man that walks must always have his guide by him; and he that walks in darkness must have his light with him; so the scriptures were given to be *a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path*.

That we may continually use the scriptures as our rule of life, we should make them our daily companion, and keep them with us continually; Josh. i. 8. *This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night*. See also Deut. vi. 6—9. So Christ commands us to search the scriptures. John v. 39. These are the mines wherein we are to dig for wisdom as for hidden treasures. Inquire, therefore, whether you do not live in the neglect of this duty, or neglect it so far, that you may be said to live in a way of sin.

(2.) Inquire whether you do not live in some way of secretly *gratifying some sensual lust.* There are many ways and degrees, wherein a carnal lust may be indulged; but every way is provoking to a holy God. Consider whether, although you restrain yourselves from more gross indulgences, you do not, in some way or other, and in some degree or other, secretly from time to time gratify your lusts, and allow yourselves to taste the sweets of unlawful delight.

Persons may greatly provoke God, by only allowedly gratifying their lusts in their thoughts and imaginations. They may also greatly provoke God by excess and intemperance in gratifying their animal appetites in those things which are in themselves lawful. Inquire, therefore, whether you do not live in some sinful way or other, in secretly gratifying a sinful appetite.

SECT. VI.

Self-examination concerning our temper of mind towards our Neighbours—and our dealings with them.

I would propose to you to examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin,—1. In the spirit and *temper of mind* which you allow towards your neighbour.

(1.) Do you not allow and indulge a *passionate*, furious disposition? If your natural temper be hasty and passionate, do you truly strive against such a temper, and labour to govern your spirit? Do you lament it, and watch over yourselves to prevent it? or do you allow yourselves in a fiery temper? Such a disposition doth not become a *Christian*, or a *man*. It doth not become a man, because it unmans him; it turns a man from a rational creature, to be like a wild beast. When men are under the prevalency of a furious passion, they have not much of the exercise of reason. We are warned to avoid such men, as being dangerous creatures, Prov. xxii. 24, 25. *Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go, lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.*

(2.) Do not you live in *hatred* towards some or other of your neighbours? Do you not hate him for real or supposed injuries that you have received from him? Do you not hate him, because he is not friendly towards you, and because you judge that he hath an ill spirit against you, and hates you, and because he opposes you, and doth not show you that respect which you think belongs to you, or doth not show himself forward to promote your interest or honour? Do you not hate him, because you think he despises you, has mean thoughts of you, and takes occasion to show it? Do you not hate him, be-

cause he is of the opposite party to that which is in your interest, and because he has considerable influence in that party.

Doubtless you will be loth to call it by so harsh a name as *hatred*; but inquire seriously and impartially, whether it be any thing better. Do you feel ill towards him? Do you not feel a prevailing disposition within you to be pleased when you hear him talked against and run down, and to be glad when you hear of any dishonour put upon him, or of any disappointments which happen to him? Would you not be glad of an opportunity to be even with him for the injuries which he hath done you? And wherein doth hatred work but in such ways as these?

(3.) Inquire whether you do not live in envy towards some one at least of your neighbours. Is not his prosperity, his riches, or his advancement in honour, uncomfortable to you? Have you not, therefore, an ill will, or at least less good will to him, because you look upon him as standing in your way, you look upon yourself as depressed by his advancement? And would it not be pleasing to you now, if he should be deprived of his riches, or of his honours, not from pure respect to the public good, but because you reckon he stands in your way? Is it not merely from a selfish spirit that you are so uneasy at his prosperity?

2. I shall propose to your consideration, whether you do not live in some way of sin, and wrong in your *dealings with your neighbours*.

(1.) Inquire whether you do not from time to time *injure and defraud* those with whom you deal. Are your ways with your neighbour altogether just, such as will bear a trial by the strict rules of the word of God, or such as you can justify before God? Are you a faithful person? may your neighbours depend on your word? Are you strictly and firmly true to your trust, or any thing with which you are betrusted, and which you undertake? Or do you not by your conduct plainly show that you are not conscientious in such things?

Do you not live in a careless, sinful neglect of *paying your debts?* Do you not, to the detriment of your neighbour, sinfully withhold that which is not your own, but his? Are you not wont to *oppress* your neighbour? When you see another in necessity, do you not thence take advantage to screw upon him? When you see a person ignorant, and perceive that you have an opportunity to make your gains of it, are you not wont to take such an opportunity? Will you not deceive in buying and selling, and labour to blind the eyes of him of whom you buy, or to whom you sell, with deceitful words, hiding the faults of what you sell, and denying the good qualities of what you buy, and not strictly keeping to the truth, when you see that falsehood will be an advantage to you in your bargain?

(2.) Do you not live in *some wrong which you have formerly*

done your neighbour, without repairing it? Are you not conscious that you have formerly, at some time or other, wronged your neighbour, and yet you live in it, have never repaired the injury which you have done him? If so, you live in a way of sin.

SECT. VII.

Self-examination respecting charity towards our Neighbours, and conversation with them.

I desire you would examine yourselves, 1. Whether you do not live in the neglect of the duties of *charity* towards your neighbour. You may live in sin towards your neighbour, though you cannot charge yourselves with living in any injustice in your dealings. Here also I would mention two things.

(1.) Whether you are guilty of *sinfully with-holding* from your neighbour who is in want. Giving to the poor, and giving liberally and bountifully, is a duty absolutely required of us. It is not a thing left to persons' choice to do as they please; nor is it merely a thing commendable in persons to be liberal to others in want; but it is a duty as strictly and absolutely required and commanded, as any other duty whatsoever; a duty from which God will not acquit us; as you may see in Deut. xv. 7, 8, &c.; and the neglect of this duty is very provoking to God, Prov. xxi. 13. *Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also himself shall cry, and not be heard.*

Inquire, therefore, whether you have not lived in a way of sin in this regard. Do you not see your neighbour suffer, and pinched with want, and you, although sensible of it, harden your hearts against him, and are careless about it? Do you not in such a case neglect to inquire into his necessities, and to do something for his relief? Is it not your manner to hide your eyes in such cases, and to be so far from devising liberal things, and endeavouring to find out the proper objects and occasions of charity, that you rather contrive to avoid the knowledge of them? Are you not apt to make objections to such duties, and to excuse yourselves? and are you not sorry for such occasions, on which you are forced to give something, or expose your reputation?—Are not such things grievous to you? If these things be so, surely you live in sin, and in great sin, and have need to inquire, whether your sport be not such as is not the sport of God's children?

(2.) Do you not live in the neglect of reproving your neighbour, when you see him going on in a way of sin? This is required of us by the command of God, as a duty of love and charity which we owe our neighbour: Lev. xix. 17. *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise*

rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. When we see our neighbour going on in sin, we ought to go, and in a Christian way deal with him about it. Nor will it excuse us, that we fear it will have no good effect; we cannot certainly tell what effect it will have. This is past doubt, that if Christians generally performed this duty as they ought to do, it would prevent abundance of sin and wickedness, and would deliver many a soul from the ways of death.

If a man going on in the ways of sin, saw that it was generally disliked and discountenanced, and testified against by others, it would have a strong tendency to reform him. His regard for his own reputation would strongly persuade him to reform; for hereby he would see that the way in which he lives makes him odious in the eyes of others. When persons go on in sin, and no one saith any thing to them in testimony against it, they know not but that their ways are approved, and are not sensible that it is much to their dishonour to do as they do. The approbation of others tends to blind men's eyes, and harden their hearts in sin; whereas, if they saw that others utterly disapprove of their ways, it would tend to open their eyes and convince them.

If others neglect their duty in this respect, and our reproof alone will not be so likely to be effectual; yet that doth not excuse us: for if one singly may be excused, then every one may be excused, and so we shall make it no duty at all.

Persons often need the reproofs and admonitions of others, to make them sensible that the ways in which we live are sinful; for, as hath been already observed, men are often blinded as to their own sins.

2. Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin in your *conversation* with your neighbours. Men commit abundance of sin, not only in the business and dealings which they have with their neighbours, but in their talk and converse with them.

(1.) Inquire whether you do not keep company with persons of a *lewd and immoral* behaviour, with persons who do not make conscience of their ways, are not of sober lives, but, on the contrary, are profane and extravagant, and unclean in their communication. This is what the word of God forbids, and testifies against: Prov. xiv. 7. *Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge;*" Prov. xiii. 20. *A companion of fools shall be destroyed.* The Psalmist professes himself clear of this sin, Psal. xxvi. 4, 5. *I have not sat with vain persons; neither will I go with dissemblers; I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the wicked.*

Do you not live in this sin? Do you not keep company with such persons? and have you not found them a snare to your souls? If you have any serious thoughts about the great

concerns of your souls, have you not found this a great hinderance to you? Have you not found that it hath been a great temptation to you? Have you not been from time to time led into sin thereby? Perhaps it may seem difficult wholly to forsake your old wicked companions. You are afraid they will deride you, and make a game of you; therefore, you have not courage enough to do it. But whether it be difficult or not, yet know this, that if you continue in such connexions, you live in a way of sin, and, as the scripture saith, *you shall be destroyed.* You must either cut off your right hands, and pluck out your right eyes, or else even go with them into the fire that never shall be quenched.

(2) Consider whether, in your conversation with others, you do not accustom yourselves to *evil speaking.* How common is it for persons, when they meet together, to sit and spend their time in talking against others, judging this or that of them, spreading ill and uncertain reports which they have heard of them, running down one and another, and ridiculing their infirmities! How much is such sort of talk as this the entertainment of companies, when they meet together! and what talk is there which seems to be more entertaining, to which persons will more listen, and in which they will seem to be more engaged, than such talk! You cannot but know how common this is.

Therefore, examine whether you be not guilty of this.—And can you justify it? Do you not know it to be a way of sin, a way which is condemned by many rules in the word of God? Are you not guilty of eagerly taking up any ill report which you hear of your neighbour, seeming to be glad that you have some news to talk of, with which you think others will be entertained? Do you not often spread ill reports which you hear of others, before you know what ground there is for them? Do you not take a pleasure in being the reporter of such news? Are you not wont to pass a judgment concerning others, or their behaviour, without talking to them, and hearing what they have to say for themselves? Doth not that folly and shame belong to you which is spoken of in Prov. xviii. 13. *He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.*

This is utterly an iniquity, a very unchristian practice, which commonly prevails, that men, when they hear or know of any ill of others, will not do a Christian part, in going to talk with them about it, to reprove them for it, but will get behind their backs before they open their mouths, and *there* are very forward to speak, and to judge, to the hurt of their neighbour's good name. Consider whether you be not guilty of this. Consider, also, how apt you are to be displeased when you hear that others have been talking against you! how forward are you to apply the rules, and to think and tell how they ought

first to have come and talked with you about it, and not to have gone and spread an ill report of you, before they knew what you had to say in your vindication! How ready are persons to resent it, when others meddle with their private affairs, and busy themselves, and judge, and find fault, and declaim against them! How ready are they to say, it is no business of theirs! Yet, are you not guilty of the same?

(3.) Is it not your manner to seem to countenance and *fall in with the talk of the company* in which you are, in that which is *evil?* When the company is vain in its talk, and falls into lewd discourse, or vain jesting, is it not your manner, in such a case, to comply and fall in with the company, to seem pleased with its talk, if not to join with it, and help to carry on such discourse, out of compliance with your company, though indeed you disapprove of it in your hearts? So inquire, whether it be not your manner to fall in with your companions, when they are talking against others. Do you not help forward the discourse, or, at least, seem to fall in with their censures, the aspersions they cast on others, and the reflections they make upon their neighbours' characters?

There are some persons, who, in case of difference between persons or parties, are *double-tongued*, will seem to fall in with *both* parties. When they are with those on one side, they will *seem* to be on their side, and to fall in with them in their talk against their antagonists. At another time, when they are with those of the other side, they will *seem* to comply with them, and will condemn the other party; which is a very vile and deceitful practice. Seeming to be friendly to both before their faces, they are enemies to both behind their backs; and that upon so mean a motive as the pleasing of the party with which they are in company. They injure both parties, and do what in them lies to establish the difference between them. Inquire whether or no this be your manner.

(4.) Is it not your manner, not to confine yourselves to *strict truth* in your conversation with your neighbours? Lying is accounted ignominious and reproachful among men: and they take it in high disdain to be called liars; yet how many are there that do not so govern their tongues, as strictly to confine them to the truth! There are various degrees of transgressing in this kind. Some, who may be cautious of transgressing in one degree, may allow themselves in another. Some, who commonly avoid speaking directly and wholly contrary to truth, in a plain matter of fact; yet perhaps are not strictly true in speaking of their own thoughts, desires, affections, and designs, and are not exact in the truth, in the relations which they give of things in conversation; scruple not to vary in circumstances, to add some things, to make their story the more entertaining; will magnify and enlarge things, to make

their relation the more wonderful; and in things wherein their interest or credit is concerned, will make false representations of things; will be guilty of an unwarrantable equivocation, and a guileful way of speaking, wherein they are chargeable with a great abuse of language. In order to save their veracity, words and sentences must be wrested to a meaning quite beside their natural and established signification. Whatever interpretation such men put on their own words they do not save themselves from the guilt of lying in the sight of God. Inquire whether you be not guilty of living in sin in this particular.

SECT. VIII.

Self-examination respecting the families to which we belong.

Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin in the *families to which you belong*. There are many persons who appear well among their neighbours, and seem to be of an honest, civil behaviour in their dealings and conversation abroad; yet if you follow them to their own houses, and to the families to which they belong, there you will find them very perverse in their ways; there they live in ways which are very displeasing to the pure all-searching eyes of God. You have already been directed to examine your conversation abroad; you have been directed to search the house of God, and to see if you have brought no defilement into it; you have been directed to search your closets, to see if there be no pollution or provocation there; be advised now to search your *houses*, examine your behaviour in the families to which you belong, and see what your ways and manners are there.

The houses to which we belong are the places where the generality of us spend the greater part of our time. If we respect the world as a man's sphere of action, a man's own house is the greater part of the world to him; i. e. the greater part of his actions and behaviour in the world is limited within this sphere. We should therefore be very critical in examining our behaviour, not only abroad but at home. A great proportion of the wickedness of which men are guilty, and that will be brought out at the day of judgment, will be the sin which they shall have committed in the families to which they belong.

Therefore inquire how you behave yourselves in the *family relations* in which you stand. As those relative duties which we owe towards the members of the same family belong to the second table of the law, so love is the general duty which comprises them all. Therefore,

(1.) Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way which is *contrary to that love* which is due to those who

belong to the same family. Love, implying a hearty good will, and a behaviour agreeable to it, is a duty which we owe to all mankind. We owe it to our neighbours, to whom we are no otherwise related than as they are our neighbours; yea, we owe it to those who stand in no relation to us, except that they are of mankind, are reasonable creatures, the sons and daughters of Adam. It is a duty that we owe to our enemies; how much more then do we owe it to those who stand in so near a relation to us as a husband or wife, parents or children, brethren or sisters!

There are the same obligations on us to love such relatives as to love the rest of mankind. We are to love them as men; we are to love them as our neighbours; we are to love them as belonging to the same Christian church; and not only so, but here is an additional obligation, arising from that near relation in which they stand to us. This is over and above the other. The nearer the relation, the greater is the obligation to love. To live in hatred, or in a way that is contrary to love, towards any man, is very displeasing to God; but how much more towards one of the same family! Love is the uniting band of all societies; Col. iii. 14. *And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*

The union in love in our own family should be so much the stronger, as that society is more peculiarly our own, and is more appropriated to ourselves, or is a society in which we are more especially interested. Christ saith, Matt. vii. 22. *I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.* If this be true concerning those who are our brethren only as men, or professing Christians, how much more concerning those who are of the same family? If contention be so evil a thing in a town among neighbours, how much more hateful is it between members of the same family? If hatred, envy, or revenge, be so displeasing to God, towards those who are only our fellow-creatures, how much more provoking must it be between those that are our natural brothers and sisters, and are one bone and flesh? If only being angry with a neighbour without a cause be so evil, how much sin must needs be committed in those broils and quarrels between the nearest relations on earth?

Let every one inquire how it is with himself. Do you not in this respect allow yourselves in some way of sin? Are you not often jarring and contending with those who dwell under the same roof? Is not your spirit often ruffled with anger towards some of the same family? Do you not often go so far as to wish evil to them in your hearts, wish that some

calamity would befall them? Are you not guilty of reproachful language towards them, if not of revengeful acts? Do you not neglect and refuse those offices of kindness and mutual helpfulness which become those who are of one family? Yea, are there not some who really go so far, as in some degree to entertain a settled hatred or malice against some of their nearest relations?—But here I would particularly apply myself,

(1.) To *husbands and wives.* Inquire whether you do not live in some way of sin in this relation. Do you make conscience of performing all those duties which God in his word requires of persons in this relation? or do you allow yourselves in some ways which are directly opposite thereto? Do you not live in ways that are contrary to the obligations into which you entered in your marriage-covenant? The promises which you then made are not only binding as promises which are ordinarily made between man and man, but they have the nature of vows or promissory oaths? they are made in the presence of God, because they respect him as a witness to them; and therefore the marriage covenant is called *the covenant of God;* Prov. iii. 17. *which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.* When you have vowed that you will behave towards those to whom you are thus united, as the word of God directs in such a relation, are you careless about it, no more thinking what you have promised and vowed, regardless how you perform those vows?

Particularly, are you not commonly guilty of bitterness of spirit towards one another, and of unkindness in your language and behaviour? If wrath, and contention, and unkind and reproachful language, be provoking to God, when only between neighbours; what is it then between those whom God hath joined together to be one flesh, and between whom he hath commanded so great and dear a friendship to be maintained? Eph. v. 28, 29. *So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.* Eph. v. 25. *Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*

It is no excuse at all for either party to indulge bitterness and contention in this relation, that the other party is to blame; for when was there ever one of fallen mankind to be found who had no faults? When God commanded such an entire friendship between man and wife, he knew that the greater part of mankind would have faults; yet he made no exception. And if you think your yoke-fellows have faults, you should consider whether you yourselves have not some too. There never will be any such thing as persons living in peace one with another, in this relation, if this be esteemed a sufficient and justifiable

cause of the contrary. It becomes good friends to cover one another's faults: *Love covers a multitude of faults:* Prov. x. 1. *Hatred stirreth up strife; but love covereth all sins.*" But are not you rather quick to spy faults, and ready to make the most of them. Are not very little things often the occasion of contention between you? Will not a little thing often ruffle your spirits towards your companions? and when any misunderstanding is begun, are you not guilty of exasperating one another's spirits by unkind language, until you blow up a spark into a flame?

Do you endeavour to accommodate yourselves to each other's tempers? Do you study to suit each other? or do you set up your own wills, to have your own ways, in opposition to each other, in the management of your family-concerns? Do you make it your study to render each other's lives comfortable? or is there not, on the contrary, very often subsisting between you a spirit of ill will, a disposition to vex and cross one another?

Husbands do sometimes greatly sin against God, in being of an unkind imperious behaviour towards their wives, treating them as if they were servants; (and to mention one instance of such treatment in particular) laying them under unjust and unreasonable restraints in the use and disposal of their common property; forbidding them so much as to dispose of any thing in charity, as of their own judgment and prudence. This is directly contrary to the word of God, where it is said of the virtuous wife, Prov. xxxi. 20, that *she stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.* If God hath made this her duty, then he hath given her this right and power, because the duty supposes the right. It cannot be the duty of her who hath no right to dispose of any thing, to stretch forth her hand to the poor, and to reach forth her hands to the needy.

On the other hand, are not the commands of God the rules of his word, and the solemn vows of the marriage-covenant, with respect to the subordination which there ought to be in this relation, made light of by many? Eph. v. 22. *Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord;* So Col. iii. 18. What is commanded by God, and what hath been solemnly vowed and sworn in his presence, certainly ought not to be made a jest of; and the person who lightly violates these obligations, will doubtless be treated as one who slights the authority of God, and takes his name in vain.

(2.) I shall apply myself to *parents and heads of families.* Inquire whether you do not live in some way of sin with respect to your children, or others committed to your care; and particularly to inquire,

1. Whether you do not live in sin, by living in the *neglect of instructing* them. Do you not wholly neglect the duty of instructing your children and servants? or if you do not wholly neglect it, yet do you not afford them so little instruction, and are you not so unsteady, and do you not take so little pains in it, that you live in a sinful neglect? Do you take pains in any measure proportionate to the importance of the matter? You cannot but own that it is a matter of vast importance, that your children be fitted for death, and saved from hell; and that all possible care be taken that it be done speedily; for you know not how soon your children may die. Are you as careful about the welfare of their souls as you are of their bodies? Do you labour as much that they may have eternal life, as you do to provide estates for them to live on in this world?

Let every parent inquire, whether he do not live in a way of sin in this respect: and let masters inquire, whether they do not live in a way of sin, in neglecting the poor souls of their servants; whether their only care be not to make their servants subservient to their worldly interest, without any concern what becomes of them to all eternity.

2. Do you not live in a sinful *neglect of the government* of your families? Do you not live in the sin of Eli? who indeed counselled and reproved his children, but did not exercise government over them. He reproved them very solemnly, as 1 Sam. ii. 23, 24, 25.; but he did not restrain them; by which he greatly provoked God, and brought an everlasting curse upon his house; 1 Sam. iii. 12. *In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house. When I begin, I will also make an end. I will judge his house for ever; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

If you say you cannot restrain your children, this is no excuse; for it is a sign that you have brought up your children without government, that your children regard not your authority. When parents lose their government over their children, their reproofs and counsel signify but little. How many parents are there who are exceedingly faulty on this account! How few are there who are thorough in maintaining order and government in their families! How is family government in a great measure vanished! and how many are likely to bring a curse upon their families, as Eli! This is one principal ground of the corruptions which prevail in the land. This is the foundation of so much debauchery, and of such corrupt practices among young people: family-government is in a great measure extinct. By neglect in this particular, parents bring the guilt of their children's sins upon their own souls, and the blood of their children will be required at their hands.

Parents sometimes weaken one another's hands in this work; one parent disapproving what the other doth; one smiling upon a child, while the other frowns; one protecting, while the other corrects. When things in a family are thus, children are like to be undone. Therefore let every one examine whether he do not live in some way of sin with respect to this matter.

(3.) I shall now apply myself to children. Let them examine themselves, whether they do not live in some way of sin towards their parents. Are you not guilty of some undutifulness towards them, in which you allow yourselves? Are you not guilty of despising your parents for infirmities which you see in them? Undutiful children are ready to contemn their parents for their infirmities. Are not you sons of Ham, who saw and made derision of his father's nakedness, whereby he entailed a curse on himself, and his posterity to this day; and not the sons of Shem and Japheth, who covered the nakedness of their father? Are you not guilty of dishonouring and despising your parents for natural infirmities, or those of old age? Prov. xxiii. 22. *Despise not thy mother when she is old.* Doth not that curse belong to you, in Deut. xxvii. 16. *Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother?*

Are you not wont to despise the counsels and reproofs of your parents? When they warn you against any sin, and reprove you for any misconduct, are you not wont to set light by it, and to be impatient under it? Do you honour your parents for it? On the contrary, do you not receive it with resentment, proudly rejecting it? Doth it not stir up corruption, and a stubborn and perverse spirit in you, and rather make you to have an ill-will to your parents, than to love and honour them? Are you not to be reckoned among the fools mentioned, Prov. xv. 5. *A fool despiseth his father's instruction?* and doth not that curse belong to you? Prov. xxx. 17. *The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it?*

Do you not allow a fretful disposition towards your parents, when they cross you in any thing? Are you not apt to find fault with your parents, and to be out of temper with them?

Consider, that if you live in such ways as these, you not only live in sin, but in that sin, than which there is scarcely any one oftener threatened with a curse in the word of God.

SECT. IX.

Awakening considerations for self-examination.

We come now to mention some things, in order to convince those who, upon examination, find that they do live in some way of sin, of the importance of their knowing and amending their manner of life. You have had directions laid before you, how to find out whether you do live in any way of sin or not; and you have heard many particulars mentioned as proper subjects for your examination of yourselves. How, then, do you find things? Do you find yourselves clear of living in any way of sin? I mean not whether you find yourself clear of sin; that is not expected of any of you; for there is not a man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not; 1 Kings, viii. 46. But is there not some way of sin in which you *live*, which is your *stated way of practice?* There are, doubtless, some, who are clear in this matter, some *who are undefiled in the way, and do no iniquity;* Psal. cxix. 1, 2, 3.

Let your own consciences answer how you find with respect to yourselves, by those things which have been proposed to you. Do you not find that you are guilty? that you *live* in a way of sin, and have *allowed* yourselves in it?—If this be the case, then consider the following things.

If you have been *long seeking salvation*, and have not yet succeeded, it may be this hath been the cause. You have, perhaps, wondered what hath been the matter, that you have been so long a time under concern about your salvation, that you have taken so much pains, and all seems to be to no purpose. You have many a time cried earnestly to God, yet he doth not regard you. Others obtain comfort, but you are left in darkness. But is it any wonder at all, if you have lived in some way of sin all this while? If you have lived in any sinful way, this is a sufficient reason why all your prayers and all your pains have been blasted.

If, all this while, you have lived in some sinful way, so far you have failed of seeking salvation in the right way. The right way of seeking salvation is, to seek it in the diligent performance of all duties, and in the denial of all ungodliness. If there be any one member that is corrupt, and you cut it not off, there is danger that it will carry you to hell, (Matt. v. 29, 30.)

2. If grace have not been flourishing, but, on the contrary, in *languishing circumstances in your souls*, perhaps this is the cause. The way to grow in grace, is to walk in the way of obedience to all the commands of God, to be very thorough in the practice of religion. Grace will flourish in the hearts of

those who live in this manner; but if you live in some way of sin, that will be like some secret disease at your vitals, which will keep you poor, weak, and languishing.

One way of sin lived in will wonderfully keep you down in your spiritual prosperity, and in the growth and strength of grace in your hearts. It will grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and will in a great measure banish him from you: this will prevent the good influence of the word and ordinances of God to the causing of grace to flourish in you. It will be a great obstacle to their good effect. It will be like an ulcer within a man, which while it remains, will keep him weak and lean, though you feed him with ever so wholesome food, or feast him ever so daintily.

3. If you have been left to *fall into great sin*, perhaps this was the occasion of it. If you have been left greatly to wound your own souls, perhaps this was what made way for it, that you allowed yourselves in some way of sin. A man who doth not avoid every sin, and is not universally obedient, cannot be well guarded against great sins. The sin in which he lives will be always an inlet, an open door, by which Satan from time to time will find entrance. It is like a breach in your fortress, through which the enemy may get in, and find his way to you greatly to hurt and wound you.

If there be any way of sin which is retained as an outlet to corruption, it will be like a breach in a dam, which, if it be let alone, and be not stopped will grow bigger and wider, and will endanger the whole. If any way of sin be lived in, it will be like *Gideon's Ephod*, which was a snare to him and his house.

4. If you live very much in *spiritual darkness*, and without the comfortable presence of God, it may be this is the cause. If you complain that you have but little sweet communion with God, that you seem to be left and deserted of God, that God seems to hide his face from you, and but seldom gives you the sweet views of his glory and grace, that you seem to be left very much to grope in darkness, and to wander in a wilderness; perhaps you have wondered what is the matter; you have cried to God often, that you might have the light of his countenance, but heareth you not; and you have sorrowful days and nights upon this account. But if you have found, by what hath been said, that you live in some way of sin, it is very probable *that* is the cause, that is the root of your mischief, that is the *Achan*, the troubler that offends God, and causes him to withdraw, and brings so many clouds of darkness upon your souls. You grieve the Holy Spirit by the way in which you live: and that is the reason that you have no more comfort from him.

Christ hath promised, that he will manifest himself to his disciples; but it is upon the condition, that they keep his commands: John xiv. 21. *He that hath my commandments, and*

keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. But if you habitually live in disobedience to any of the commandments of Christ, then it is no wonder that he doth not give you the comfortable manifestations of himself. The way to receive the special favours of God, and to enjoy comfortable communion with him, is to walk closely with him.

5. If you have been long *doubting about your condition*, perhaps this is the cause. If persons be converted, the most likely way to have the evidences of it clear, and to have the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirits, that we are the children of God, is to walk closely with God. This, as we have observed already, is the way to have grace in a flourishing state in the soul; it is the way to have the habits of grace strengthened, and the exercises of it lively. And the more lively the exercises of grace are the more likely will they be to be seen. Besides this is the way to have God manifesting himself to us, as our father and our friend, to have the manifestations and inward testimonies of his love and favour.

But if you live in some way of sin, it is no wonder if that greatly darkens your evidences, as it keeps down the exercises of grace, and hides the light of God's countenance. And it may be that you never will come to a comfortable resolution of that point, whether you be converted or not, until you shall have wholly forsaken the way of sin in which you live.

6. If you have met with the *frowns of Providence*, perhaps this hath been the cause. When you have met with very sore rebukes and chastisements, that way of sin hath probably been your troubler. Sometimes God is exceedingly awful in his dealings with his own people in this world, for their sins. Moses and Aaron were not suffered to enter into Canaan, because they believed not God, and spake unadvisedly with their lips, at the waters of Meribah. And how terrible was God in his dealings with David! what affliction in his family did he send upon him! one of his sons ravishing his sister; another murdering his brother, and having expelled his father out of his kingdom, openly in the sight of all Israel, and in the sight of the sun, defiling his father's concubines on the top of the house, and at last coming to a miserable end? Immediately after this followed the rebellion of Sheba; and he had this uncomfortable circumstance attending the end of his life, that he saw another of his sons usurping the crown.

How awfully did God deal with Eli, for living in the sin of not restraining his children from wickedness! He killed his two sons in one day; brought a violent death upon Eli himself; took the ark from him, and sent it into captivity; cursed his house for ever; and sware that the iniquity of his house should not be purged with sacrifice and offering for ever; that the priesthood

should be taken from him, and given to another family; and that there should never be an old man in his family.

Is not some way of sin in which you live, the occasion of the frowns and rebukes of Providence which you have met with? True, it is not the proper business of your neighbours to judge you with respect to events of Providence; but you yourselves ought to inquire, wherefore God is contending with you, Job. ix. 10.

7. If *death be terrible to you*, perhaps this is the foundation of it. When you think of dying, you find you shrink back at the thought. When you have any illness, or when there is any thing which seems any way to threaten life, you find you are affrighted by it; the thoughts of dying, and going into eternity, are awful to you; and that although you entertain a hope that you are converted. If you live in some way of sin, probably this is very much the foundation of it. This keeps your minds sensual and worldly, and hinders a lively sense of heaven and heavenly enjoyments. This keeps grace low, and prevents that relish of heavenly enjoyments which otherwise you would have. This prevents your having the comfortable sense of the divine favour and presence; and without that, no wonder you cannot look death in the face without terror.

The way to have the prospect of death comfortable, and to have undisturbed peace and quiet when we encounter death, is, to walk closely with God, and to be undefiled in the way of obedience to the commands of God; and that it is otherwise sometimes with truly godly persons, is doubtless frequently owing to their living in ways displeasing to God.

8. If you find by these things which have been proposed to you, that you have lived in a way of sin, consider that if you henceforward live in the same way, you will live in *known* sin. Whether in time past, it have been known sin or not, though you may have hitherto lived in it through ignorance or inadvertence; yet if now you be sensible of it, henceforward, if you continue in it still, it will not be a sin of *ignorance*, but you will be proved to be of that class of men who live *in ways of known sin*.

SERMON VII.*

A WARNING TO PROFESSORS OF RELIGION: OR THE GREAT GUILT OF THOSE WHO ATTEND ON THE ORDINANCES OF DIVINE WORSHIP, AND YET ALLOW THEMSELVES IN ANY KNOWN WICKEDNESS.

EZEK. xxiii. 37, 38, 39.

That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands; And with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire to devour them. Moreover, this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my Sabbaths. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo! thus have they done in the midst of mine house.

INTRODUCTION.

SAMARIA and Jerusalem, or Israel and Judah, are here represented by two women, Aholah and Aholibah; and their idolatry and treachery towards their covenant God is represented by the adultery of these women. They forsook God, who was their husband, and the guide of their youth, and prostituted themselves to others. The baseness of Aholah and Aholibah towards God, their husband, is here pointed out by two things, viz. adultery and bloodshed: *They have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands.*

1. They committed adultery with other lovers, viz. with their idols: *With their idols have they committed adultery.*

2. They not only committed adultery, but they took their children, that they bore to God, and killed them for their lovers. Their hearts were quite alienated from God, their husband, and

* This Tract is the substance of two posthumous discourses on this text, first printed at Edinb., 1788.

they were so bewitched with lust after those other lovers, that they took their own children, whom they had by their husband, and put them to cruel deaths, to make a feast with them for their lovers; as it is said in ver. 37. "And have also caused my sons whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire to devour them."

But here is a twofold wickedness of those actions of theirs held forth to us in the words. (1.) The wickedness of them considered in themselves; for who can express the horrid baseness of this their treatment of God, their husband? (2.) An additional wickedness, resulting from the joining of these actions with sacred things. Beside the monstrous wickedness of these actions in themselves considered, there was this which exceedingly increased the guilt, that on the same day they came into God's sanctuary, or that they lived in such wickedness at the same time that they came and attended the holy ordinances of God's house, pretending to worship and adore him, whom they all the while treated in such a horrid manner; and so herein defiled and profaned holy things; as in verses 38 and 39. "Moreover, this have they done unto me; they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my Sabbaths. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary, to profane it; and, lo! thus have they done in the midst of mine house."

Doctrine.—When they that attend ordinances of divine worship allow themselves in known wickedness, they are guilty of dreadfully profaning and polluting those ordinances.

By a divine ordinance, when the expression is used in its greatest latitude, is meant any thing of divine institution or appointment. Thus we call marriage a divine ordinance, because it was appointed by God. So civil government is called an ordinance of God: Rom. xiii. 1, 2. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are *ordained* of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the *ordinance* of God."

But the word is more commonly used only for an instituted or appointed way or mean of worship. So the sacraments are ordinances; so public prayer, singing of praise, the preaching of the word, and the hearing of the word preached, are divine ordinances. The setting apart of certain officers in the church, the appointed ways of discipline, public confession of scandals, admonition, and excommunication, are ordinances. These are called the ordinances of *God's house*, or of public worship; and these are intended in the doctrine; it is the profanation of these ordinances that is spoken of in the text: "They came into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo! thus have they done in

the midst of mine house," saith God. This doctrine seems to contain two propositions.

SECT. I.

The Ordinances of God are holy.

Divine ordinances are holy in the following respects:

1. They are *conversant* wholly and immediately about God, and things divine. When we are in the attendance on the ordinances of divine worship, we are in the special presence of God. When persons come and attend on the ordina ces of God, they are said to come before God, and to come into his presence: Jer. vii. 10. *Come and stand before me, in this house which is called by my name;* Psal. c. 2. *Come into his presence with singing.*

In divine ordinances, persons have immediate intercourse with God, either in applying to him, as in prayer and singing praises, or in receiving from him, waiting solemnly and immediately on him for spiritual good, as in hearing the word; or in both applying to God and receiving from him, as in the sacraments. They were appointed on purpose that in them men might converse and hold communion with God. We are poor, ignorant, blind worms of the dust; and God did not see it meet that our way of intercourse with God should be left to ourselves; but God hath given us his ordinances, as ways and means of conversing with him.

In these ordinances, holy and divine things are exhibited and represented. In the preaching of the word, holy doctrines and the divine will are exhibited; in the sacraments, Christ Jesus and his benefits are represented; in prayer and praise, and in the attendance on the word and sacraments, are represented our faith, love and obedience.

2. The *end* of God's ordinances is holy. The immediate end is to glorify God. They are instituted to direct us in the holy exercises of faith and love, divine fear and reverence, submission, thankfulness, holy joy and sorrow, holy desires, resolutions, and hopes. True worship consists in these holy and spiritual exercises; and as these divine ordinances are the ordinances of worship, they are to help us, and to direct us in such a worship as this.

3. They have the sanction of *divine authority.* They are not only conversant about a divine and holy object, and designed to direct and help us in divine and holy exercises, but they have a divine and holy author. The infinitely great and holy God hath appointed them, the eternal Three in One. Each person in the Trinity hath been concerned in their institution.

God the Father hath appointed them, and that by his own Son. They are of Christ's own appointment; and he appointed, as he had received of the Father: John xii. 49. "*I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, he gave me commandment what I should say and what I should speak.*" And the Father and Son more fully revealed and ratified them by the Spirit; and they are committed to writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

They are holy, in that God hath hallowed them, or consecrated them. They are conversant about holy things; and God ordained them, that in them *we* might be conversant about holy things. They are for a holy use; and it is God who, by his own immediate authority, ordained them for that holy use; which renders them much more sacred than otherwise they would have been.

4. They are attended *in the name* of God. Thus we are commanded to do all that we do, in word or deed, in the name of Christ, Col. iii. 17.: which is to be understood especially of our attendance on ordinances. Ordinances are administered in the name of God. When the word is preached by authorized ministers, they speak in God's name, as Christ's ambassadors, as co-workers together with Christ: 2 Cor. v. 20. *Now are we ambassadors for Christ;* chap. vi. 1. *We are workers together with him.* When a true minister preaches, he speaks as the oracles of God, 1 Pet. iv. 11; and he is to be heard as one representing Christ.

So in administering the sacraments, the minister represents the person of Christ; he baptises in his name, and in the Lord's Supper stands in his stead. In administering church censures, he still acts, as the apostle expresses it, in the person of Christ, 2 Cor. ii. 10. On the other hand, the congregation, in their addresses to God in ordinances, as prayer and praise, act in the name of Christ, the Mediator, as having him to represent them, and as coming to God by him.

SECT. II.

God's Ordinances are dreadfully profaned by those who attend on them, and yet allow themselves in ways of wickedness.

Persons who come to the house of God, into the holy presence of God, attending the duties and ordinances of his public worship, pretending with others, according to divine institution, to call on the name of God, to praise him, to hear his word, and commemorate Christ's death, and who yet, at the same time, are wittingly and allowedly going on in wicked courses, or in any practice contrary to the plain rules of the word of

God, therein greatly profane the holy worship of God, defile the temple of God, and those sacred ordinances on which they attend. The truth of this proposition appears by the following considerations.

1. By attending ordinances, and yet living in allowed wickedness, they show great *irreverence* and contempt of those holy ordinances. When persons who have been committing known wickedness, and yet live in it, and have no other design than to go on still in the same, when they come from their wickedness, as it were the same day, as it is expressed in the text, and attend the sacred, solemn worship and ordinances of God, and then go from the house of God directly to the like allowed wickedness—they hereby express a most irreverent spirit with respect to holy things, and in a horrid manner cast contempt upon God's sacred institutions, and on those holy things which we are concerned with in them.

They show that they have no reverence of that God who hath allowed these ordinances. They show a contempt of that divine authority which instituted them. They show a horribly irreverent spirit towards that God into whose presence they come, and with whom they immediately have to do in ordinances, and in whose name these ordinances are performed and attended. They show a contempt of that adoration of God, of that faith and love, and that humiliation, submission, and praise, which ordinances were instituted to express. What an irreverent spirit doth it show, that they are so careless after what manner they come before God! that they take no care to cleanse and purify themselves, in order that they may be fit to come before God! yea, that they take no care to avoid making themselves more and more unclean and filthy.

They have been taught, many a time, that God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity, and how exceedingly he is offended with sin; yet they care not how unclean and abominable they come into his presence. It shows horrid irreverence and contempt, that they are so bold, that they are not *afraid* to come into the presence of God in such a manner; and that they will presume to go out of the presence of God, and from an attendance upon holy things, again to their sinful practices. If they had any reverence of God, and holy things, an approach into his presence, and an attendance on those holy things, would leave that awe upon their minds, that they would not dare to go immediately from them to their ways of known wickedness.

It would show a great irreverence in any person towards a king, if he should not care how he came into his presence, and if he should come in a sordid habit, and in a very indecent manner. How much more horrid irreverence doth it show, for persons willingly, and allowedly to defile themselves with that

filth which God infinitely hates, and so frequently to come into the presence of God!

2. By making a show of respect to God in ordinances, and then acting the contrary in their lives, they do but *mock* God. In attending ordinances, they make a show of respect to God. By joining in prayer, in public adorations, confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings, they make a show of high thoughts of God, and of humbling themselves before him; of sorrow for their sins; of thankfulness for mercies, and of a desire of grace and assistance to obey and serve God. By attending upon the hearing of the word, they make a show of a teachable spirit, and of a readiness to practise according to the instructions given. By attending on the sacraments, they make a show of faith in Christ, of choosing him for their portion, and of spiritually feeding upon him.

But, by their actions, they all the while declare the contrary. They declare that they have no high esteem of God, but that they despise him in their hearts. They declare, that they are so far from repenting of, that they intend to continue in their sins. They declare, that they have no desire of that grace and assistance to live in a holy manner for which they prayed, and that they had rather live wickedly: this is what they choose, and, for the present, are resolved upon. They declare, by their actions, that there is no truth in what they pretend in hearing the word preached; that they had a desire to know what the will of God is, that they might be directed in their duty; for they declare by their actions, that they desire not to do the will of God, and that they do not intend any such thing; but intend, on the contrary, to disobey him; and that they prefer their carnal interests before his authority and glory.

They declare by their actions, that there is no truth in what they pretend in their attendance on the sacraments, that they desire to be fed with spiritual nourishment, and to be conformed and assimilated to Christ, and to have communion with him. They show by their practices, that they have no regard to Christ; and that they had rather have their lusts gratified, than to be fed with his spiritual food: They show, that they desire not any assimilation to Christ, but to be different from him, and of an opposite character to him: They show, that instead of desiring communion with Christ, they are his resolved and allowed enemies, wilfully acting the part of enemies to Christ, dishonouring him, and promoting the interest of Satan against him.

Now, what can this be else but mockery, to make a show of great respect, reverence, love, and obedience, and at the same time wilfully to declare the reverse in actions. If a rebel or traitor should send addresses to his king, making a show of great loyalty and fidelity, and should all the while openly, and in the

king's sight, carry on designs of dethroning him, how could his addresses be considered as any other than mockery? If a man should bow and kneel before his superior, and use many respectful terms to him, but at the same time should strike him, or spit in his face, would his bowing and his respectful terms be looked upon in any other light than as done in mockery? When the Jews kneeled before Christ, and said, *Hail, King of the Jews*, but at the same time spit in his face, and smote him upon the head with a reed; could their kneeling and salutations be considered as any other than mockery?

Men who attend ordinances, and yet willingly live in wicked practices, treat Christ in the same manner that these Jews did. They come to public worship, and pretend to pray to him, to sing his praises, to sit and hear his word; they come to the sacrament, pretending to commemorate his death. Thus they kneel before him, and say, *Hail, King of the Jews;* yet at the same time they live in ways of wickedness, which they know Christ hath forbidden, of which he hath declared the greatest hatred, and which are exceedingly to his dishonour. Thus they buffet him, and spit in his face. They do as Judas did, who came to Christ saying, *Hail, Master*, and kissed him; at the same time betraying him into the hands of those who sought his life.

How can it be interpreted in any other light, when men come to public worship, and attend ordinances, and yet will be drunkards and profane swearers, will live in lasciviousness, injustice, or some other known wickedness? If a man should pray to God to keep him from drunkenness, and at the same time should put the bottle to his own mouth, and drink himself drunk; the absurdity and horrid wickedness of his conduct would be manifest to every man. But the very same thing though not so visible to us, is done by those who make profession of great respect to God, and pray God from time to time to keep them from sin; yet at the same time have no design to forsake their known sins, but intend the contrary.

God sees men's designs and resolutions more plainly than we can see their outward actions; therefore for a man to pray to God to be kept from sin, and at the same time to intend to sin, is mockery as visible to God as if he prayed to be kept from some particular sin, which he was at the same time willingly and allowedly committing.

These persons are guilty of a horrid profanation of God's ordinances; for they make them occasions of a greater affront to God, the occasions of showing their impudence and presumption; for he who lives in wilful wickedness, and doth not enjoy the ordinances of God, is not guilty of so great presumption, as he who attends these ordinances, and yet allows himself in wickedness. This latter acts as though he came into the

presence of God on purpose to affront him. He comes from time to time to hear the will of God, and all the while designs disobedience, and goes away and acts directly contrary to it.

A servant would affront his master by wilfully disobeying his commands in any wise. But he would affront him much more, if he should on every occasion come to him to inquire his will, as though he were ready to do whatever his master would have him do, and then should immediately go away and do the contrary.

3. They put the ordinances of God to a *profane use*. The ordinances of God are holy, as they are set apart of God to an holy use and purpose. They are the worship of God, instituted for the ends of giving honour and glory to him, and to be means of grace and spiritual good to us. But those persons who attend these ordinances, and yet live in allowed wickedness, aim at neither of these ends: they, in their attendance on ordinances neither aim to give honour to God, or to express any love, or esteem, or thankfulness; nor do they sincerely seek the good of their own souls. It is not truly the aim of any such persons to obtain grace, or to be made holy; their actions plainly show that this is not their desire; they choose to be wicked, and intend it.

It is not therefore to these purposes that they improve the holy ordinances of God; but they put them to another and profane use. They attend ordinances to avoid that discredit which a voluntarily and habitual absence from them would cause among those with whom they live, to avoid the punishment of human laws, or for their worldly advantage; to make up for other wickedness, or for some other carnal purposes. Thus they profane the ordinances of God, by perverting them to profane purposes.

4. When persons thus treat God's holy ordinances, it tends to *beget contempt* of them in others. When others see sacred things commonly used so irreverently, and attended with such carelessness and contempt, and treated without any sacred regard; when they see persons are bold with them, treat them without any solemnity of spirit; when they see them thus commonly profaned, it tends to diminish their sense of their sacredness, and to make them seem no very awful things. In short, it tends to embolden them to do the like.

The holy vessels and utensils of the temple and tabernacle were never to be put to a common use, nor to be handled without the greatest care and reverence: for if it had been commonly otherwise, the reverence of them could not have been maintained; they would have seemed no more sacred than any thing else. So it is in the ordinances of Christian worship.

SECT. III.

A call to self-examination.

Let this doctrine put all upon *examining* themselves, whether they do not allow themselves in known wickedness. You are such as do enjoy the ordinances of divine worship. You come into the holy presence of God, attending on those ordinances, which God, by sacred authority, hath hallowed and set apart, that in them we might have immediate intercourse with himself; that we might worship and adore him, and express to him a humble, holy, supreme respect; and that in them we might receive immediate communications from him.

Here you come and speak to God, pretending to express your sense how glorious he is, and how worthy that you should fear and love him, humble yourselves before him, devote yourselves to him, obey him, and have a greater respect to his commands and to his honour, than to any temporal interest, ease, or pleasure of your own. Here you pretend before God, that you are sensible how unworthily you have done by sins committed in times past, and that you have a great desire not to do the like in time to come. You pretend to confess your sins, and to humble yourselves for them. Here you pray that God would give you his spirit to assist you against sin, to keep you from the commission of it, enable you to overcome temptations, and help you to walk holily in all your conversation, as though you really had a great desire to avoid such sins as you have been guilty of in time past. And the like pretences you have made in your attendance upon the other ordinances, as in hearing the word, in singing praise, &c.

But consider whether you do not horribly defile and profane the public prayers and other ordinances. Notwithstanding all your pretences, and what you seem to hold forth by your attendance on them, do you not all the while live in known wickedness against God? For all your pretences of respect to God, of humiliation for sin, and desires to avoid it, have you not come directly from the allowed practice of known sin to God's ordinances, and did not at all repent of what you had done, nor at all sorry for it at the very time when you stood before God, making these pretences; and even had no design of reformation, but intended to return to the same practice again after your departure from the presence of God? I say, Hath not this, on many occasions, been your manner of coming and attending on the ordinances of divine worship? Not only so, but, is it not still your manner, your common way of attending upon these ordinances, even to this very day? Do you not lie to God with your tongues, when you pretend, that he is a great God, and that

you are poor, guilty unworthy creatures, deserving his wrath by the sins of which you have been guilty? and when you pretend, that you earnestly desire he would keep you from the like for time to come? Are you not guilty of horrid mockery of God in it, when at the same time you design no such thing, but the contrary?

Do you not even the same day that you come into God's house, and to his ordinances, allow yourselves in known sins? Do you not with consent and approbation think of the sinful practices, in which you allow yourselves, and in which you have been exercising yourselves in the week past? Do you not the very day in which you attend ordinances, allowedly please and gratify a wicked imagination? And are you not then perpetrating wickedness in your thoughts, and contriving the further fulfilment of your wickedness? Yea, are you not guilty of these things sometimes even in the very time of your attendance on ordinances, when you are in the immediate presence of God! And while others have immediate intercourse with God, and you likewise pretend to the same? Do you not even in these circumstances, allow yourselves in wicked thoughts and imaginations, voluntarily wallowing in known wickedness?

Are not some of you guilty of allowedly breaking God's Holy Sabbath, in maintaining no government of your thoughts, thinking indifferently about any thing that comes next to mind; and not only thinking, but talking too about common, worldly affairs? And sometimes talking in such a manner, as is not suitable even on other days; talking profanely, or in an unclean manner, sporting and diverting yourselves in such conversation on God's holy day? Yea, it is well if some have not been thus guilty in the very time of attendance on the ordinances of worship.

Examine yourselves, how it hath been with you. You all attend many of the ordinances of divine worship. You come to the house of God, attend public prayers, singing, and preaching of the word; and many of you come to the Lord's supper, that holy ordinance, instituted for the special commemoration of the greatest and most wonderful of all divine acts towards mankind; for the special and visible representation of the most glorious and wonderful things of our religion; for the most solemn profession and renewal of our engagement to God; and for special communion with Jesus Christ. Let such examine themselves whether they do not allow themselves in known sin, to the horrid profanation and pollution of this most sacred ordinance.

Examine and see whether you do not allow yourselves in some way of dealing with your fellow-men, which you have sufficient light to know to be evil; or whether you do not allow yourselves in a known evil behaviour towards some person or persons of the families to which you respectively belong, as to-

wards your husbands, your wives, your children or servants; or your neighbours, in your spirit and behaviour towards them, or in your talk of them.

Examine whether you do not some way willingly indulge an unclean appetite, in less or grosser acts of uncleanness, or in your discourse, or in your imagination. Or do you not give way to a lust after strong drink, or indulge yourselves in some vicious excess in gratifying some sensual appetite in meat or drink or otherwise? Are you not willingly guilty of vanity, and extravagance in your conversation.

Do you not, for all your attendance on ordinances, continue in the allowed neglect of your precious souls, neglecting secret prayer or some known duty of private religion? Or do you not allow yourselves in sabbath-breaking?—In all these ways are the ordinances of God's sacred worship polluted and profaned.

Men are apt to act very treacherously and perversely in the matter of self-examination. When they are put upon examining themselves, they very often decline it, and will not enter into any serious examination of themselves at all. They hear uses of examination insisted on, but put them off to others, and never seriously apply them to themselves.—And if they do examine themselves, when they are put upon it, they are exceedingly partial to themselves; they spare themselves; they do not search, and look, and pass a judgment according to truth: but so as unreasonably to favour and justify themselves.—If they can be brought to examine themselves at all, whether they do not allow themselves in known wickedness, although they attend on divine ordinances, they will not do it impartially. Their endeavour will not be indeed to know the truth of their case, and to give a true answer to their consciences; but to blind themselves, to persuade and flatter themselves that they do not allow themselves in known sin, whether it be true or not. There are two things especially wherein persons often act very perversely and falsely in this matter.

1. Persons very often deal very perversely in pretending, that the sins in which they live are *not known* sins. Nothing is more common surely, than for persons to flatter themselves with this concerning the wickedness in which they live. Let that wickedness be almost what it may, they will plead to their consciences and endeavour to still them, that there is no evil in it, or that they do not *know* that there is any evil in it. Men's own consciences can best tell how they are wont to do in this matter. —There is hardly any kind of wickedness that men commit, but they will plead thus in excuse for it. They will plead thus about their cheating and injustice, about their hatred of their neighbours, about their evil speaking, about their revengeful spirit, about their excessive drinking, about their lying, their ne-

glect of secret prayer, their lasciviousness, their unclean dalliances; yea, they will plead excuses for very gross acts of uncleanness, as fornication, adultery and what not. They have their vain excuses and carnal reasonings in favour of all their evil actions. They will say, What harm, what evil is there in such and such an action? And if there be a plain rule against it, yet they will plead that their circumstances are peculiar, and that they are excepted from the general rule; that their temptation is so great, that they are excusable; or some thing will they find to plead.

If it be some thing upon which their lusts are much set, and about which they feel remorse of conscience, they will never leave studying and contriving with all the art and subtilty of which they are masters, till they shall have found out some reason, some excuse, with which they shall be able in some measure to quiet their consciences. And whether after all they shall have made it out to blind conscience or not, yet they will plead that their argument is good, and it is no sin; or if it be a sin it is only a sin of ignorance.—So men will plead for the wickedness which they do in the dark. So without doubt some very *gross* sinners plead to their consciences; as would appear, if we could but look into their hearts; when indeed the strongest argument they have, *that in such a thing there is no evil*, is the strongest lust they have to it, the inordinate desire they have to commit it.

It was the saying of one, *Licitis perimus omnes;* that is, *we all perish by lawful things;* which is as much as to say, men commonly live wickedly and go to hell, in those ways which they flatter themselves to be lawful. Or at least they flatter themselves, that they are sins of ignorance; they do not know them to be unlawful.—Thus, I make no doubt, some will be apt to do, in applying to themselves this use of examination, if they can be persuaded to apply it to themselves at all. Whether these things be true of you, let your own consciences speak, you that neglect secret prayer; you that live in secret, unclean, lascivious actions; you that indulge an inordinate appetite for strong drink; you that defraud or oppress others; you that indulge a spirit of revenge and hatred towards your neighbour.—Here I desire you to consider two or three things.

(1.) Not all sins, which one knows not with a certain knowlege to be sinful, are justly called sins of ignorance. Men often will excuse themselves for venturing upon a sinful action or practice, with this, that they know not that it is sinful; which is at most true no otherwise, than as they do not know it to be sinful with a *certain* knowledge, or with the evidence of absolute demonstration; although at the same time it is a sin against their light, and against great light. They have been so taught, that they have had light enough to make them sensible that it

is displeasing to God, and not warranted or allowed by him. And they do in their consciences think it to be sinful; they are secretly convinced of it, however they may pretend the contrary, and labour to deceive themselves and to persuade themselves that they do not think there is any evil in it.

Those sins which are contrary to sufficient information and instruction, and contrary to the real dictates of their own consciences, or to the judgment of their own minds; whether there be certain or demonstrative knowledge or no; these are what I would be understood to mean, when I speak of known sins. Such light as this, whether there be absolutely certain knowledge or no, is sufficient to render the action utterly inexcusable, and to render it, when allowed, a horrible profanation and pollution of the holy ordinances of God.

(2.) It is in vain for persons to pretend that those are sins of ignorance, which they have often and clearly heard testified against from the word of God. It will be found to be so at last; it will be found to be a vain thing for persons who have lived under the light of the gospel, and where all manner of iniquity is testified against, if they live in immoral and vicious practices, to pretend that they are sins of ignorance; unless the case be very peculiar and extraordinary.

(3.) It is in vain for you to pretend that those are sins of ignorance, of which you would not dare to proceed in the practice, if you knew that your soul was to be required of you this night. Persons do many things, for which they plead, and pretend they think there is no evil in them, who yet would as soon eat fire, as do the same, if they knew that they were to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ within four and twenty hours. This shows that persons do but prevaricate, when they pretend that their sins are sins of ignorance.

2. Another way wherein men deal falsely and perversely in this matter, is, in pretending that they do *not allow* themselves in those sins which they practise. They either pretend that they know them not to be sins, or if they cannot but own that, then they will say, they do not allow themselves in them; and so they hope God is not very much provoked by them. They pretend this, though they make a trade of them. They go on repeating one act after another, without ever seriously repenting of the past, or resolving against future acts. But take heed that you do not deceive yourselves in this matter; for such pretences, however they do something towards stilling your consciences now, will do nothing when you come to stand before your righteous and holy Judge.

SECT. IV.

Address to such as attend ordinances, and yet allow themselves in known sin.

Consider how holy and sacred the ordinances of God are: what mockery you are guilty of in making such a show, and such pretences in attending ordinances, and yet voluntarily acting the reverse of what you pretend. Consider that there is no sort of sinners with whom God is so provoked, and who stand so guilty before him, as the profaners of his ordinances. The fire of God's wrath is kindled by none so much as by the polluters of holy things. They are represented as those who are especially guilty before God, in the third commandment: *The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.* Why is this annexed to this command, rather than to any other of the ten, but because the breach of it especially renders a man guilty in the sight of God?

The taking of God's name in vain includes the profanation and pollution of ordinances and holy things. They do in a very dreadful manner take God's name in vain, who attend on his ordinances, and yet live in known sin; for, as we have shown, they manifest the greatest irreverence for him, and contempt of divine things. They manifest a contempt of his authority, a contempt of the business and design of his ordinances, and a most careless and irreverent spirit in things wherein they have immediate converse with God. Ordinances, as we have shown, are attended in the name of God; and therefore, by such an attendance on them, the name of God is greatly profaned. You that attend ordinances in such a manner, take the name of God so much in vain, that you use it only in mockery, and so as to expose it to contempt. Such a way of attending ordinances is a trampling of all that is sacred under foot.

We have in scripture scarce any such awful instances of the immediate and miraculous vengeance of God, as on the profaners of holy things. How did God consume Nadab and Abihu for offering strange fire before him! How did he break forth upon Uzza, for handling the ark with too much irreverence! 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7. *And how did he break forth on the children of Israel at Bethshemesh, for profaning the ark! He smote of the people fifty thousand three score and ten men*, as in 1 Sam. vi. 19.

And God hath threatened in the New Testament, that if any man *defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy*, 1 Cor. iii. 17. There is an emphasis in the expression. God will destroy all sinners, let it be what sin it will, which they commit, and in which they continue; and yet it is said, *If any man defile the temple of God*, him

shall God destroy, as if it had been said, there is something peculiar in the case, and God is especially provoked to destroy such and consume them in the fire of his wrath; and he will indeed destroy them with a destruction especially dreadful.

So God hath declared, Gal. vi. 7. *that he will not be mocked;* i. e. if any presume to mock him, they will find him, by experience, to be no contemptible being. God will vindicate his holy majesty from the contempt of those who dare to mock him, and he will do it effectually: they shall fully find how dreadful a being he is, whose name they have daringly profaned and polluted. Defilers and profaners of ordinances, by known and allowed wickedness, provoked God more than the Heathen, who have no ordinances. Thus the wickedness of Judah and Jerusalem is said to be far worse than that of Sodom, though the inhabitants of Sodom were, as we have reason to think, some of the worst of the Heathens. See Ezek. xvi. 46, 47, &c. The sin of Sodom is here spoken of as a light thing in comparison with the sins of Judah. And what should be the reason, but that Judah enjoyed holy things which they profaned and polluted, which Sodom had no opportunity to do? for it is not to be supposed, that Judah otherwise arrived to the same pass that Sodom had.

Consider therefore, ye who allow yourselves in known wickedness, and live in it, who yet come to the house of God, and to his ordinances from time to time, without any serious design of forsaking your sins, but, on the contrary, with an intention of continuing in them, and who frequently go from the house of God to your wicked practices; consider how guilty you have made yourselves in the sight of God, and how dreadfully God is provoked by you. It is a wonder of God's patience, that he doth not break forth upon you, and strike you dead in a moment; for you profane holy things in a more dreadful maner than Uzza did, when yet God struck him dead for his error. And whereas he was struck dead for only one offence; you are guilty of the same sin from week to week, and from day to day.

It is a wonder, that God suffers you to live upon earth; that he hath not, with a thunderbolt of his wrath, struck you down to the bottomless pit long ago. You that are allowedly and voluntarily living in sin, who have gone on hitherto in sin, are still going on, and do not design any other than to go on yet; it is a wonder that the Almighty's thunder lies still, and suffers you to sit in his house, or to live upon earth. It is a wonder that the earth will bear you, and that hell doth not swallow you up. It is a wonder that fire doth not come down from heaven, or come up from hell, and devour you; that hell-flames do not enlarge themselves to reach you, and that the bottomless pit hath not swallowed you up.

However, that you are as yet borne with, is no argument that your damnation slumbers. The anger of God is not like the passions of men, that it should be in haste. There is a day of vengeance and recompense appointed for the vessels of wrath; and when the day shall have come, and the iniquity shall be full, none shall deliver out of God's hand. Then will he recompense, even recompense into your bosoms.

SERMON VIII.

THE FINAL JUDGMENT, OR THE WORLD JUDGED RIGHTEOUSLY &c. BY JESUS CHRIST.

Acts xvii. 31.

Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.

INTRODUCTION.

These words are a part of the speech which Paul made in Mars-Hill, a place of concourse of the judges and learned men of Athens. Athens was the principal city of that part of Greece which was formerly a commonwealth by itself, and was the most noted place in the whole world for learning, philosophy, and human wisdom; and it continued so for many ages; till at length the Romans having conquered Greece, its renown from that time began to diminish; and Rome having borrowed learning of it, began to rival it in science, and in the polite and civil arts. However, it was still very famous in the days of Christ and the apostles, and was a place of concourse for wise and learned men.

Therefore, when Paul came thither, and began to preach concerning Jesus Christ, a man who had lately been crucified at Jerusalem, (as in the 18th verse,) the philosophers thronged about him, to hear what he had to say. The strangeness of his doctrine excited their curiosity; for they spent their time in endeavouring to find out new things, and valued themselves greatly upon their being the authors of new discoveries, as we are informed in ver. 21. They despised his doctrine in their hearts, and esteemed it very ridiculous, calling the apostle a babbler; for the preaching of Christ crucified was to the Greeks foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 23. yet the Epicurean and Stoic philoso-

phers, two different sects, had a mind to hear what the babbler had to say.

Upon this Paul rises up in the midst of them, and makes a speech; and as he speaks to philosophers and men of learning, he speaks quite differently from his common mode of address. There is evidently, in his discourse, a greater depth of thought, more philosophical reasoning, and a more elevated style, than are to be found in his ordinary discourses to common men. His speech is such as was likely to draw the attention, and gain the assent of philosophers. He shows himself to be no babbler, but a man who could offer such reason, as they, however they valued themselves upon their wisdom, were not able to gainsay. His practice here is agreeable to what he saith of himself, 1 Cor. ix. 22. "that he became all things to all men, that he might by all means save some." He not only to the weak became as weak, that he might gain the weak; but to the wise he became as wise, that he might gain the wise.

In the first place, he reasons with them concerning their worship of idols. He declares to them the true God, and points out how unreasonable it is to suppose, that he delights in such superstitious worship. He begins with this, because they were most likely to hearken to it, as being so evidently agreeable to the natural light of human reason, and also agreeable to what some of their own poets and philosophers had said, (ver. 28.) He begins not immediately to tell them about Jesus Christ, his dying for sinners, and his resurrection from the dead; but first draws their attention with that to which they were more likely to hearken; and then, having thus introduced himself, he proceeds to speak concerning Jesus Christ.

He tells them, the times of this ignorance concerning the true God, in which they had hitherto been, God winked at; he suffered the world to lie in heathenish darkness; but now the appointed time was come, when he expected *men should every where repent;* "because he had appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained." As an enforcement to the duty of turning to God from their ignorance, superstition, and idolatry, the apostle brings in this, that God had appointed such a day of judgment. And as a proof of this, he brings the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

Concerning the words of the text, we may observe,

That in them the apostle speaks of the general judgment: *He will judge the* WORLD.—The time when this shall be, on the appointed day: *He hath appointed a day.*—How the world is to be judged: *In righteousness.*—The man by whom it is to be judged: *Christ Jesus, whom God raised from the dead.*

DOCTRINE. There is a day coming, in which there will be a general righteous judgment of the whole world, by Jesus Christ.

In speaking upon this subject, I shall show, That God is the supreme judge of the world. That there is a time coming, when God will, in the most public and solemn manner, judge the whole world. That the person by whom he will judge it, is Jesus Christ. That the transactions of that day, will be greatly interesting, and truly awful. That all shall be done in righteousness. And, finally, I shall take notice of those things which shall be immediately consequent upon the judgment.

SECT. I.

God is the Supreme Judge of the World.

1. God is so by *right*. He is, by right, the supreme and absolute ruler and disposer of all things, both in the natural and moral world. The rational, understanding part of the creation, is, indeed, subject to a different sort of government from that to which irrational creatures are subject. God governs the sun, moon, and stars; he governs even the motes of dust which fly in the air. Not a hair of our heads falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father. God, also, governs the brute creatures; by his providence, he orders, according to his own decrees, all events concerning those creatures. And rational creatures are subject to the same sort of government; all their actions,* and all events relating to them, being ordered by superior providence, according to absolute decrees; so that no event that relates to them, ever happens without the disposal of God, according to his own decrees. The rule of this government, is God's wise decree, and nothing else.

But rational creatures, because they are intelligent and voluntary agents, are the subjects of another kind of government. They are so only with respect to those of their actions, in which they are *causes by counsel*, or with respect to their voluntary actions. The government of which I now speak, is called *moral* government, and consists in two things—in giving laws, and in judging.

God is, with respect to this sort of government, by right the sovereign *ruler* of the world. He is possessed of this right by reason of his infinite greatness and excellency, by which he merits, and is perfectly and solely fit for, the office of supreme ruler. He that is so excellent as to be infinitely worthy of the highest respect of the creature, hath, thereby, a right to that

* Except as they are *sinful*; for the *sinfulness* of actions is not included in the *decrees* of God, who is pure act from eternity to eternity.

respect; he deserves it by a merit of condignity; so that it is injustice to deny it to him. And he that is perfectly wise and true, and is only so regarded, hath a right in every thing to be regarded, and to have his determinations attended to and obeyed.

God hath, also, a right to the character of supreme ruler, by reason of the absolute dependence of every creature on him. All creatures, and rational creatures no less than others, are wholly derived from him, and every moment are wholly dependent upon him for being, and for all good: so that they are properly his possession. And as, by virtue of this, he hath a right to give his creatures whatever rules of conduct he pleases, or whatever rules are agreeable to his own wisdom; so the mind and will of the creature ought to be entirely conformed to the nature and will of the Creator, and to the rules he gives that are expressive of it.

For the same reason, he hath a right to *judge* their actions and conduct, and to fulfil the sanction of his law. He who hath an absolute and independent right to give laws, hath, evermore, the same right to judge those to whom the laws are given. It is absolutely necessary that there should be a judge of reasonable creatures; and sanctions, or rewards and punishments, annexed to rules of conduct, are necessary to the being of laws. A person may instruct another without sanctions, but not give laws. However, these sanctions themselves are vain, are as good as none, without a judge to determine the execution of them. As God hath a right to be judge, so hath he a right to be the *supreme* judge; and none hath a right to reverse his judgments, to receive appeals from him, or to say to him, Why judgest thou thus?

2. God is *in fact* the supreme judge of the world. He hath power sufficient to vindicate his own right. As he hath a right which cannot be disputed, so he hath power which cannot be controlled. He is possessed of omnipotence, wherewith to maintain his dominion over the world; and he doth maintain his dominion in the moral as well as the natural world. Men may refuse subjection to God as a lawgiver: they may shake off the yoke of his laws by rebellion; yet they cannot withdraw themselves from his judgment. Although they will not have God for their lawgiver, yet they shall have him for their judge. The strongest of creatures can do nothing to control God, or to avoid him while acting in his judicial capacity. He is able to bring them to his judgment-seat, and is also able to execute the sentence which he shall pronounce.

There was once a notable attempt made by opposition of power entirely to shake off the yoke of the moral government of God, both as lawgiver, and as judge. This attempt was made by the angels, the most mighty of creatures; but they miserably failed in it: God notwithstanding acted as their judge

in casting those proud spirits out of heaven, and binding them in chains of darkness unto a further judgment, and a further execution. *God is wise in heart and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?* Job ix. 4. Wherein the enemies of God deal proudly, he is above them. He ever hath acted as judge in bestowing what rewards, and inflicting what punishments he pleased on the children of men. And so he doth still; he is daily fulfilling the promises and threatenings of the law, in disposing of the souls of the children of men, and so he evermore will act.

God acteth as judge towards the children of men more especially.

(1.) In man's particular judgment at death. Then the sentence is executed, and the reward bestowed *in part;* which is not done without a judgment. The soul, when it departs from the body, appears before God to be disposed of by him, according to his law. But by this appearing before God, to be judged at death, we need understand no more than this, that the soul is made immediately sensible of the presence of God; God manifesting himself immediately to the soul, with the glory and majesty of a judge; that the sins of the wicked, and the righteousness of the saints, are brought by God to the view of their consciences, so that they know the reason of the sentence given, and their consciences are made to testify to the justice of it; and that thus the will of God for the fulfilment of the law, in their reward or punishment, is made known to them and executed. This is undoubtedly done at every man's death.

(2) In the great and general judgment, when all men shall together appear before the judgment-seat to be judged: which judgment will be much more solemn, and the sanctions of the law will to a further degree be fulfilled.—But this brings me to another branch of the subject.

SECT. II.

That there is a time coming when God will, in the most public and solemn manner, judge the whole world of mankind.

The doctrine of a general judgment is not sufficiently discoverable by the light of nature. Indeed some of the heathens had some obscure notions concerning a future judgment. But the light of nature, or mere unassisted reason, was not sufficient to instruct the world of fallen men in this doctrine. It is one of the peculiar doctrines of revelation, a doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There were indeed some hints of it in the Old Testament, as in Psal. xcvi. 13. *The Lord cometh to judge the world with righteousness, and his people with his truth.* And Eccl. xii. 14. *For God will bring every work into judgment.*

with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. And in some other such like passages. But this doctrine is with abundantly the greatest clearness revealed in the New Testament: there we have it frequently and particularly declared and described with its circumstances.

However, although it be a doctrine of revelation, and be brought to light by the gospel, the brightest and most glorious revelation that God hath given to the world; yet it is a doctrine which is entirely agreeable to reason, and of which reason gives great confirmation. That there will be a time before the dissolution of the world, when the inhabitants of it shall stand before God and give an account of their conduct; and that God will in a public manner, by a general and just judgment, set all things to rights respecting their moral behaviour, is a doctrine entirely agreeable to reason; which I shall now endeavour to make appear. But I would premise, that what we would inquire into, is not whether all mankind shall be judged by God; for that is a thing that the light of nature clearly teaches, and we have already spoken something of it: but whether it be rational to think that there will be a *public* judgment of all mankind *together*. This I think will appear very rational from the following considerations.

1. Such a judgment will be a more glorious display of God's majesty and dominion; it will be more glorious, because it will be more open, public, and solemn.—Although God now actually exercises the most sovereign dominion over the earth; although he reigns and doth all things according to his own will, ordering all events as seemeth to himself good; and although he is actually judge in the earth, continually disposing of men's souls according to their works; yet he rules after a more hidden and secret manner, insomuch that it is common among the proud sons of men, to refuse acknowledging his dominion. Wicked men question the very existence of a God, who taketh care of the world, who ordereth the affairs of it, and judgeth in it; and therefore they cast off the fear of him. Many of the kings and great men of the earth do not suitably acknowledge the God who is above them, but seem to look upon themselves as supreme, and therefore tyrannize over mankind, as if they were in nowise accountable for their conduct. There have been, and now are, many atheistical persons, who acknowledge not God's moral dominion over mankind; and therefore they throw off the yoke of his laws and government. And how great a part of the world is there now, and has there always been, that has not acknowledged that the government of the world belongs to the God of Israel, or to the God of Christians; but has paid homage to other imaginary deities, as though they were their sovereign lords and supreme judges. Over how great a part of the

world hath Satan usurped the dominion, and set up himself of God, in opposition to the true God?

Now, how agreeable to reason is it, that God, in the winding up of things, when the present state of mankind shall come to a conclusion, should in the most open and public manner, manifest his dominion over the inhabitants of the earth, by bringing them all, high and low, rich and poor, kings and subjects, together before him to be judged with respect to all that they ever did in the world: that he should thus openly discover his dominion in this world, where his authority hath been so much questioned, denied, and proudly opposed? That those very persons, who have thus denied and opposed the authority of God, should be themselves, with the rest of the world, brought before the tribunal of God? That however God be not now visibly present upon earth, disposing and judging in that visible manner that earthly kings do; yet at the conclusion of the world he should make his dominion visible to all, and with respect to all mankind, so that every eye shall see him, and even they who have denied him, shall find, that God is supreme Lord of them, and of the whole world?

2. The end of judgment will be more fully answered by a public and general, than only by a particular and private judgment. The end for which there is any judgment at all is to display and glorify the righteousness of God; which end is more fully accomplished by calling men to an account, bringing their actions to the trial, and determining their state according to them, the whole world, both angels and men, being present to behold, than if the same things should be done in a more private way. At the day of judgment there will be the most glorious display of the justice of God that ever was made. Then God will appear to be entirely righteous towards every one: the justice of all his moral government will on that day be at once discovered. Then all objections will be removed; the conscience of every man shall be satisfied; the blasphemies of the ungodly will be for ever put to silence, and argument will be given for the saints and angels to praise God for ever: Rev. xix. 1, 2, *And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power be to the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments.*

3. It is very agreeable to reason, that the irregularities which are so open and manifest in the world, should, when the world comes to an end, be publicly rectified by the supreme governor. The infinitely wise God, who made this world to be a habitation for men, and placed mankind to dwell here, and hath appointed man his end and work, must take care of the order and good government of the world which he hath thus made. He is not regardless how things proceed here on earth: it would be a reproach to his wisdom, and to the perfect recti-

tude of his nature, to suppose so. This world is a world of confusion; it hath been filled with irregularity and confusion ever since the fall; and the irregularities of it are not only private, relating to the actions of particular persons; but states, kingdoms, nations, churches, cities, and all societies of men in all ages, have been full of public irregularities. The affairs of the world, so far as they are in the hands of men, are carried on in the most irregular and confused manner.

Though justice sometimes takes place, yet how often do injustice, cruelty and oppression prevail! How often are the righteous condemned, and the wicked acquitted and rewarded! How common is it for the virtuous and pious to be depressed, and the wicked to be advanced! How many thousands of the best men have suffered intolerable cruelties merely for their virtue and piety, and in this world have had no help, no refuge to fly to. The world is very much ruled by the pride, covetousness, and passions of men. Solomon takes much notice of such like irregularities in the present state, (in his book of Ecclesiastes,) whereby he shows the vanity of the world.

Now, how reasonable is it to suppose, that God, when he shall come and put an end to the present state of mankind, will, in an open, public manner, the whole world being present, rectify all these disorders! and that he will bring all things to a trial by a general judgment, in order that those who have been oppressed, may be delivered; that the righteous cause may be pleaded and vindicated, and wickedness, which has been approved, honoured, and rewarded, may receive its due disgrace and punishment; that the proceedings of kings and earthly judges may be inquired into by him, whose eyes are as a flame of fire; and that the public actions of men may be publicly examined and recompensed, according to their desert! How agreeable is it to divine wisdom thus to order things, and how worthy of the supreme governor of the world!

4. By a public and general judgment, God more fully accomplishes the reward he designs for the godly, and the punishment he designs for the wicked. One part of the reward which God intends for his saints, is the honour which he intends to bestow upon them. He will honour them in the most public and open manner, before the angels, before all mankind, and before them that hated them. And it is most suitable that it should be so; it is suitable that those holy, humble souls, that have been hated by wicked men, have been cruelly treated, and put to shame by them, and who have been haughtily domineered over, should be openly acquitted, commended, and crowned, before all the world.

So one part of the punishment of the ungodly, will be the open shame and disgrace which they shall suffer. Although many of them have proudly lifted up their heads in this world,

have had a very high thought of themselves, and have obtained outward honour among men; yet God will put them to open shame, by showing all their wickedness and moral filthiness before the whole assembly of angels and men; by manifesting his abhorrence of them, in placing them upon his left hand, among devils and foul spirits; and by turning them away into the most loathsome, as well as most dreadful pit of hell, to dwell there for ever.—Which ends may be much more fully accomplished in a general, than in a particular judgment.

SECT. III.

The world will be judged by Jesus Christ.

The person by whom God will judge the world, is Jesus Christ, God-man. The second person in the Trinity, that same person of whom we read in our Bibles, who was born of the Virgin Mary, lived in Galilee and Judea, and was, at last, crucified without the gates of Jerusalem, will come to judge the world, both in his divine and human nature; in the same human body that was crucified, and rose again, and ascended up into heaven: Acts i. 11. *This same Jesus that is taken up from you into heaven, shall come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven.* It will be his human nature which will then be seen by the bodily eyes of men. However, his divine nature, which is united to the human, will then, also, be present: and it will be by the wisdom of that divine nature, that Christ will see and judge.

Here naturally arises an inquiry, Why is Christ appointed to judge the world, rather than the Father or the Holy Ghost? We cannot pretend to know all the reasons of the divine dispensations. God is not obliged to give us an account of them. But so much may we learn by divine revelation, as to discover marvellous wisdom in what he determines and orders with respect to this matter. We learn,

1. That God seeth fit, that he who is in the *human nature*, should be the judge of those who are of the human nature: John v. 27. *And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.* Seeing there is one of the persons of the Trinity united to the human nature, God chooses, in all his transactions with mankind, to transact by him. He did so of old, in his discoveries of himself to the patriarchs, in giving the law, in leading the children of Israel through the wilderness, and in the manifestations he made of himself, in the tabernacle and temple: when, although Christ was not actually incarnate, yet he was so in design, it was ordained and agreed in the covenant of redemption, that he should become incarnate. And since the incarnation of Christ, God governs both the

church and the world by Christ. So he will, also, at the end, *judge* the world by him. All men shall be judged by God, and yet at the same time by one invested with their own nature.

God seeth fit, that those who have bodies, as all mankind will have at the day of judgment, should see their Judge with their bodily eyes, and hear him with their bodily ears. If one of the other persons of the Trinity had been appointed to be judge, there must have been some extraordinary outward appearance made on purpose to be a token of the divine presence, as it was of old, before Christ was incarnate. But now there is no necessity of that: now, one of the persons of the Trinity is actually incarnate, so that God, by him, may appear to bodily eyes without any miraculous visionary appearance.

2. Christ hath this honour of being the judge of the world given him, as a *suitable reward* for his sufferings. This is a part of Christ's exaltation. The exaltation of Christ is given him in reward for his humiliation and sufferings. This was stipulated in the covenant of redemption; and we are expressly told, it was given him in reward for his sufferings, Phil. ii. 8—12. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God, also, hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

God seeth meet, that he who appeared in such a low estate amongst mankind, without form or comeliness, having his divine glory vailed, should appear amongst men a second time, in his own proper majesty and glory, without a vail; to the end that those who saw him here at the first, as a poor, frail man, not having where to lay his head, subject to much hardship and affliction, may see him the second time in power and great glory, invested with the glory and dignity of the absolute Lord of heaven and earth; and that he, who once tabernacled with men, and was despised and rejected of them, may have the honour of arraigning all men before his throne, and judging them with respect to their eternal state: John v. 21—24.

God seeth meet, that he who was once arraigned before the judgment-seat of men, and was there most vilely treated, being mocked, spitted upon, and condemned, and who was at last crucified, should be rewarded, by having those very persons brought to his tribunal, that they may see him in glory, and be confounded; and that he may have the disposal of them for all eternity; as Christ said to the high priest, while arraigned before him, Matt. xxvi. 64. *Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

3. It is needful that Christ should be the judge of the world, in order that he may *finish* the work of redemption. It is the will of God, that he who is the Redeemer of the world, should be a *complete* Redeemer; and that, therefore, he should have the whole work of redemption left in his hands. Now, the redemption of fallen man consists not merely in the impetration of redemption, by obeying the divine law, and making atonement for sinners, or in preparing the way for their salvation, but it consists, in a great measure, and is actually fulfilled, in converting sinners to the knowledge and love of the truth, in carrying them on in the way of grace and true holiness through life, and in finally raising their bodies to life, in glorifying them, in pronouncing the blessed sentence upon them, in crowning them with honour and glory in the sight of men and angels, and in completing and perfecting their reward. Now, it is necessary that Christ should do this, in order to his finishing the work which he hath begun. Raising the saints from the dead, judging them, and fulfilling the sentence, is part of their salvation; and, therefore, it was necessary that Christ should be appointed judge of the world, in order that he might *finish* his work. (John vi. 39, 40: chap. v. 25—31.) The redemption of the bodies of the saints, is part of the work of redemption; the resurrection to life is called a redemption of their bodies, (Rom. viii. 23.)

It is the will of God, that Christ himself should have the fulfilling of that for which he died, and for which he suffered so much. Now the end for which he suffered, and died, was the complete salvation of his people; and this shall be obtained at the last judgment, and not before. Therefore, it was necessary that Christ be appointed judge, in order that he himself might fully accomplish the end for which he had both suffered and died. When Christ had finished his appointed sufferings, God did, as it were, put the purchased inheritance into his hands, to be kept for believers, and be bestowed upon them at the day of judgment.

4. It was proper, that he, who is appointed King of the church, should rule till he should have put all his enemies under his feet; in order to which, he must be the judge of his *enemies*, as well as of his people. One of the offices of Christ, as Redeemer, is that of a King; he is appointed King of the church, and head over all things to the church; and, in order that his kingdom be complete, and the design of his reign be accomplished, he must *conquer* all his enemies, and then he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father: 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25. *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.* Now, when Christ shall have

brought his enemies, who had denied, opposed, and rebelled against him, to his judgment-seat, and shall have passed and executed sentence upon them, this will be a final and complete *victory* over them—a victory which shall put an end to the war. And it is proper that he, who at present reigns, and is carrying on the war against those who are of the opposite kingdom, should have the honour of obtaining the victory, and finishing the war.

5. It is for the abundant *comfort of the saints* that Christ is appointed to be their judge. The covenant of grace, with all its circumstances, and all those events to which it hath relation, is every way so contrived of God, as to give strong consolation to believers: for God designed the gospel for a glorious manifestation of his grace to them; and therefore every thing in it is so ordered, as to manifest the most grace and mercy.

Now, it is for the abundant consolation of the saints, that their own redeemer is appointed to be their judge; that the same person who spilled his blood for them hath the determination of their state left with him; so that they need not doubt but that they shall have what he was at so much cost to procure.

What matter of joy to them will it be at the last day, to lift up their eyes, and behold the person in whom they have trusted for salvation, to whom they have fled for refuge, upon whom they have built as their foundation for eternity, and whose voice they have often heard, inviting them to himself for protection and safety, coming to judge them.

6. That Christ is appointed to be the judge of the world, will be for the more abundant *conviction of the ungodly*. It will be for their conviction, that they are judged and condemned by that very person whom they have rejected, by whom they might have been saved, who shed his blood to give them an *opportunity* to be saved, who was wont to offer his righteousness to them when they were in their state of trial, and who many a time called and invited them to come to him, that they might be saved. How justly will they be condemned by him whose salvation they have rejected, whose blood they have despised, whose many calls they have refused, and whom they have pierced by their sins!

How much will it be for their conviction, when they shall hear the sentence of condemnation pronounced, to reflect with themselves, how often hath this same person, who now passes sentence of condemnation upon me, called me, in his word, and by his messengers, to accept of him, and to give myself to him? How often hath he knocked at the door of my heart? and had it not been for my own folly and obstinacy, how might I have had him for my *Saviour*, who is now my incensed *Judge!*

SECT. IV.

Christ's coming, the resurrection, the judgment prepared, the books opened, the sentence pronounced and executed.

1. Christ Jesus will, in a most magnificent manner, descend from heaven with all the holy angels. The man Christ Jesus is now in the heaven of heavens, or, as the apostle expresses it, *far above all heavens*, Eph. iv. 10. And there he hath been ever since his ascension, being there enthroned in glory, in the midst of millions of angels and blessed spirits. But when the time appointed for the day of judgment shall have come, notice of it will be given in those happy regions, and Christ will descend to the earth, attended with all those heavenly hosts, in a most solemn, awful, and glorious manner. Christ will come with divine majesty, he will come in the glory of the Father, Matt. xvi. 27. *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels.*

We can now conceive but little of the holy and awful magnificence in which Christ will appear, as he shall come in the clouds of heaven, or of the glory of his retinue. How mean and despicable, in comparison with it, is the most splendid appearance that earthly princes can make! A glorious visible light will shine round about him, and the earth, with all nature, will tremble at his presence. How vast and innumerable will that host be which will appear with him! Heaven will be for the time deserted of its inhabitants.

We may argue the glory of Christ's appearance, from his appearance at other times. When he appeared in transfiguration, his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. The apostle Peter long after spake of this appearance in magnificent terms, 2 Pet. i. 16, 17. *We were eye-witnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory.* And his appearances to St. Paul at his conversion, and to St. John, as related in Rev. i. 13, &c. were very grand and magnificent. But we may conclude, that his appearance at the day of judgment will be vastly more so than either of these, as the occasion will be so much greater. We have good reason to think, that our nature, in the present frail state, could not bear the appearance of the majesty in which he will then be seen.

We may argue the glory of his appearance, from the appearances of some of the angels to men; as of the angel that appeared at Christ's sepulchre, after his resurrection, Matt. xxviii. 3. *His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.* The angels will doubtless all of them make as

glorious an appearance at the day of judgment, as ever any of them have made on former occasions. How glorious then, will be the retinue of Christ, made up of so many thousands of such angels! and how much more glorious will Christ, the judge himself, appear, than those his attendants! Doubtless their God will appear immensely more glorious than they.

Christ will thus descend into our air, to such a distance from the surface of the earth, that every one, when all shall be gathered together, shall see him, Rev. i. 7. *Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him.*

Christ will make this appearance suddenly, and to the great surprise of the inhabitants of the earth. It is therefore compared to a cry at midnight, by which men are wakened in a great surprise.

2. At the sound of the last trumpet, the dead shall rise, and the living shall be changed. As soon as Christ is descended, the last trumpet shall sound, as a notification to all mankind to appear; at which mighty sound shall the dead be immediately raised, and the living changed: 1 Cor. xv. 52. "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed;" Matt. xxiv. 31. "and he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet:" 1 Thess. iv. 16. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." There will be some great and remarkable signal given for the rising of the dead, which it seems will be some mighty sound, caused by the angels of God who shall attend on Christ.

Upon this all the dead shall rise from their graves; all, both small and great, who shall have lived upon earth since the foundation of the world; those who died before the flood, and those who were drowned in the flood; all that have died since that time, and that shall die, to the end of the world. There will be a great moving upon the face of the earth and in the waters, in bringing bone to his bone, in opening graves, and bringing together all the scattered particles of dead bodies. The earth shall give up the dead that are in it, and the sea shall give up the dead that are in it.

However the parts of the bodies of many are divided and scattered; however many have been burnt, and their bodies have been turned to ashes and smoke, and driven to the four winds; however many have been eaten of wild beasts, of the fowls of heaven, and the fishes of the sea; however many have consumed away upon the face of the earth, and great part of their bodies have ascended in exhalations; yet the all-wise and all-powerful God can immediately bring every part to his part again.

Of this vast multitude some shall rise to life, and others to condemnation. John v. 28, 29. "All that are in the graves shall

hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

When the bodies are prepared, the departed souls shall again enter into their bodies, and be reunited to them, never more to be separated. The souls of the wicked shall be brought up out of hell, though not out of misery, and shall very unwillingly enter into their bodies, which will be but eternal prisons to them. Rev. xx. 13. "and death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them." They shall lift their eyes full of the utmost amazement and horror to see their awful Judge. And perhaps the bodies with which they shall be raised will be most filthy and loathsome, thus properly corresponding to the inward, moral turpitude of their souls.

The souls of the righteous shall descend from heaven together with Christ and his angels: 1 Thess. iv. 14. "Them also which sleep in Jesus, shall God bring with him. They also shall be re-united to their bodies, that they may be glorified with them. They shall receive their bodies prepared by God to be mansions of pleasure to all eternity. They shall be every way fitted for the uses, the exercises, and delights of perfectly holy and glorified souls. They shall be clothed with a superlative beauty, similar to that of Christ's glorious body: Phil. iii. 21. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Their bodies shall rise incorruptible, no more liable to pain or disease, and with an extraordinary vigour and vivacity, like that of those spirits that are as a flame of fire. 1 Cor. xv. 43, 44. "It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." With what joy will the souls and bodies of the saints meet, and with what joy will they lift up their heads out of their graves to behold the glorious sight of the appearing of Christ! And it will be a glorious sight to see those saints arising out of their graves, putting off their corruption, and putting on incorruption and glory.

At the same time, those that shall then be alive upon the earth shall be changed. Their bodies shall pass through a great change, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. *Behold, I show you a great mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.* The bodies of the wicked then living will be changed into such hideous things, as shall be answerable to the loathsome souls that dwell in them, and such as shall be prepared to receive and administer eternal torments without dissolution. But the bodies of the righteous shall be changed into the same glorious and immortal form in which those that shall be raised will appear.

3. They shall all be brought to appear before Christ, the godly being placed on the right hand, the wicked on the left; Matt. xxv. 31, 32, 33. The wicked, however unwilling, however full of fear and horror, shall be brought or driven before the judgment-seat. However they may try to hide themselves, and for this purpose creep into dens and caves of the mountains, and cry to the mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; yet there shall not one escape; to the judge they must come, and stand on the left hand with devils. On the contrary, the righteous will be joyfully conducted to Jesus Christ, probably by the angels. Their joy will, as it were, give them wings to carry them thither. They will with ecstacies and raptures of delight meet their friend and saviour, come into his presence, and stand at his right hand.

Besides the one standing on the right hand and the other on the left, there seems to be this difference between them, that when the dead in Christ shall be raised, they will all be caught up into the air, where Christ shall be, and shall be there at his right hand during the judgment, never more to set their feet on this earth. Whereas the wicked shall be left standing on the earth, there to abide the judgment. 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. *The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

And what a vast congregation will there be of all the men, women and children that shall have lived upon earth from the beginning to the end of the world! Rev. xx. 12. *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.*

4. The next thing will be, that the books shall be opened: Rev. xx. 12. *I saw the dead, great and small stand before God; and the books were opened.* Which books seem to be these two, the book of God's remembrance, and the book of scripture; the former as the evidence of their deeds which are to be judged, the latter as the rule of judgment. The works both of the righteous and of the wicked will be brought forth, that they may be judged according to them, and those works will be tried according to the appointed and written rule.

(1.) The works of both righteous and wicked will be rehearsed. The book of God's remembrance will be first opened. The various works of the children of men are, as it were, written by God in a book of remembrance, Mal. iii. 16. *A book of remembrance was written before him.* However ready ungodly men may be to make light of their own sins, and to forget them; yet God never forgetteth any of them: neither doth God forget any of the good works of the saints. If they give but a cup of cold water with a spirit of charity, God remembers it.

The evil works of the wicked shall then be brought forth to light. They must then hear of all their profaneness, their impenitence, their obstinate unbelief, their abuse of ordinances, and various other sins. The various aggravations of their sins will also be brought to view, as how this man sinned after such and such warnings, that after the receipt of such and such mercies; one after being so and so favoured with outward light, another after having been the subject of inward conviction, excited by the immediate agency of God. Concerning these sins, they shall be called to account to see what answer they can make for themselves: Matt. xii. 36. *But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.* Rom. xiv. 12. *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

The good works of the saints will also be brought forth as evidences of their sincerity, and of their interest in the righteousness of Christ. As to their evil works, they will not be brought forth against them on that day: for the guilt of them will not lie upon them, they being clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The Judge himself will have taken the guilt of their sins upon him; therefore their sins will not stand against them in the book of God's remembrance. The account of them will appear to have been cancelled before that time. The account that will be found in God's book will not be of debt, but of credit. God cancels their debts, and sets down their good works, and is pleased, as it were, to make himself a debtor for them, by his own gracious act.

Both good and bad will be judged according to their works; Rev. xx. 12. "And the dead were judged out of those things that were found written in the books, according to their works;" and verse 13. "And they were judged every man according to their works." Though the righteous are justified by faith, and not by their works, yet they shall be judged *according to* their works: then works shall be brought forth as the evidence of their faith. Their faith, on that great day, shall be tried by its fruits. If the works of any man shall have been bad; if his life shall appear to have been unchristian, that will condemn him, without any further inquiry. But if his works, when they shall be examined, prove good, and of the right sort, he shall surely be justified. They will be declared as a sure evidence of his having believed in Jesus Christ, and of his being clothed with his righteousness.

But by works, we are to understand all voluntary exercises of the faculties of the soul; as, for instance, the words and conversation of men, as well as what is done with their hands: Matt. xii. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Nor are we to understand only outward acts, or the thoughts outwardly expressed, but,

also, the thoughts themselves, and all the inward workings of the heart. Man judgeth according to the outward appearance, but God judgeth the heart: Rev. ii. 23. "I am he that searcheth the heart and the reins, and I will give unto every one of you according to his works." Nor will only positive sins be brought into judgment, but, also, omissions of duty, as is manifest by Matt. xxv. 42, &c.—"For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink," &c.

On that day, secret and hidden *wickedness* will be brought to light. All the uncleanness, injustice, and violence, of which men have been guilty in secret, shall be manifest both to angels and men. Then it will be made to appear, how this and that man have indulged themselves in wicked imaginations, in lascivious, covetous, malicious, or impious desires and wishes; and how others have harboured in their hearts enmity against God and his law; also, impenitency and unbelief, notwithstanding all the means used with them, and motives set before them, to induce them to repent, return, and live.

The *good works* of the saints, also, which were done in secret, shall then be made public, and even the pious and benevolent affections and designs of their hearts; so that the real and secret characters of both saints and sinners, shall then be most clearly and publicly displayed.

(2.) The book of scripture will be opened, and the works of men will be tried by that touchstone. Their works will be compared with the word of God. That which God gave men for the rule of their action, while in this life, shall then be made the rule of their judgment. God hath told us, beforehand, what will be the rule of judgment. We are told, in the scriptures, upon what terms we shall be justified, and upon what terms we shall be condemned. That which God hath given us to be our rule in our lives, he will make his own rule in judgment.

The rule of judgment will be twofold. The *primary* rule of judgment will be the law. The law ever hath stood, and ever will stand in force, as a rule of judgment, for those to whom the law was given: Matt. v. 18. "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." The law will so far be made the rule of judgment, that not one person, at that day, shall, by any means, be justified or condemned, in a way inconsistent with that which is established by the law. As to the wicked, the law will be so far the rule of judgment respecting them, that the sentence denounced against them will be the sentence of the law. The righteous will be so far judged by the law, that although their sentence will not be the sentence of the law, yet it will by no means be such a sentence as shall be inconsistent with the law, but such as it allows: for it will be by the righteousness of the law that they shall be justified.

It will be inquired concerning every one, both righteous and wicked, whether the law stands against him, or whether he hath a fulfilment of the law to show. As to the *righteous*, they will have fulfilment to show; they will have it to plead, that the judge himself hath fulfilled the law for them; that he hath both satisfied for their sins, and fulfilled the righteousness of the law for them: Rom. x. 4. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." But as to the wicked, when it shall be found, by the book of God's remembrance, that they have broken the law, and have no fulfilment of it to plead, the sentence of the law shall be pronounced upon them.

A *secondary* rule of judgment will be the gospel, or the covenant of grace, wherein it is said, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned;" Rom. ii. 16. "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." By the gospel, or covenant of grace, eternal blessedness will be adjudged to believers. When it shall be found that the law hinders not, and that the curse and condemnation of the law stands not against them, the reward of eternal life shall be given them, according to the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

5. The sentence will be pronounced. Christ will say to the wicked on the left hand, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." How dreadful will these words of the judge be to the poor, miserable, despairing wretches on the left hand! How amazing will every syllable of them be! How will they pierce them to the soul! These words show the greatest wrath and abhorrence. Christ will bid them depart; he will send them away from his presence, will remove them for ever far out of his sight, into an everlasting separation from God, as being most loathsome, and unfit to dwell in his presence, and enjoy communion with him.

Christ will call them *cursed; depart, ye cursed*, to whom everlasting wrath and ruin belong; who are by your own wickedness prepared for nothing else, but to be firebrands of hell; who are the fit objects and vessels of the vengeance and fury of the Almighty. *Into fire;* he will not send them away merely into a loathsome prison, the receptacle of the filth and rubbish of the universe; but into a furnace of fire; that must be their dwelling-place, there they must be tormented with the most racking pain and anguish. It is *everlasting* fire; there is eternity in the sentence, which infinitely aggravates the doom, and will make every word of it immensely more dreadful, sinking and amazing to the souls that receive it. *Prepared for the devil and his angels;* this sets forth the greatness and intenseness of the torments, as the preceding part of the sentence does the duration. It shows the dreadfulness of that fire to which

they shall be condemned, that it is the same that is prepared for the devils, those foul spirits and great enemies of God. Their condition will be the same as that of the devils, in many respects; particularly as they must burn in the fire for ever.

This sentence will doubtless be pronounced in such an awful manner as shall be a terrible manifestation of the wrath of the judge. There will be divine, holy, and almighty wrath manifested in the countenance and voice of the judge; and we know not what other manifestations of anger will accompany the sentence. Perhaps it will be accompanied with thunders and lightnings far more dreadful than were on mount Sinai at the giving of the law. Correspondent to these exhibitions of divine wrath, will be the appearances of terror and most horrible amazement in the condemned. How will all their faces look pale! how will death sit upon their countenances, when those words shall be heard! What dolorous cries, shrieks, and groans! What trembling, and wringing of hands, and gnashing of teeth, will there then be!

But with the most benign aspect, in the most endearing manner, and with the sweetest expressions of love, will Christ invite his saints on his right hand to glory; saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." He will not bid them to go from him, but *to come with him;* to go where he goes; to dwell where he dwells; to enjoy him, and to partake with him. He will call them *blessed*, blessed of *his Father*, blessed by him whose blessing is infinitely the most desirable, namely God. *Inherit the kingdom:* they are not only invited to go with Christ, and to dwell with him, but to inherit a kingdom with him; to sit down with him on his throne, and to receive the honour and happiness of a heavenly kingdom. *Prepared for you from the foundation of the world;* this denotes the sovereign and eternal love of God, as the source of their blessedness. He puts them in mind, that God was pleased to set his love upon them long before they had a being, even from eternity; that therefore God made heaven on purpose for them, and fitted it for their delight and happiness.

6. Immediately after this, the sentence will be executed, as we are informed, Matt. xxv. 46. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." When the words of the sentence shall have once proceeded out of the mouth of the judge, then that vast and innumerable throng of ungodly men shall go away, shall be driven away, shall be necessitated to go away with devils, and shall with dismal cries and shrieks be cast into the great furnace of fire prepared for the punishment of devils, the perpetual thunders and lightnings of the wrath of God following them. Into this fire they must in both soul and body enter, never more to come out. Here they

must spend eternal ages in wrestling with the most excruciating torments, and in crying out in the midst of the most dreadful flames, and under the most insupportable wrath.

On the other hand, the righteous shall ascend to heaven with their glorified bodies, in company with Christ, his angels, and all that host which descended with him; they shall ascend in the most joyful and triumphant manner, and shall enter with Christ into that glorious and blessed world, which had for the time been empty of its creature inhabitants. Christ having given his church that perfect beauty, and crowned it with that glory, honour, and happiness, which were stipulated in the covenant of redemption before the world was, and which he died to procure for them, and having made it a truly glorious church, every way complete; will present it before the Father, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Thus shall the saints be instated in everlasting glory, to dwell there with Christ, who shall feed them and lead them to living fountains of water, to the full enjoyment of God, and to an eternity of the most holy, glorious, and joyful employments.

SECT. V.

All will be done in righteousness.

Christ will give to every man his due, according to a most righteous rule. Those who shall be condemned, will be most justly condemned; will be condemned to that punishment which they shall most justly deserve; and the justice of God in condemning them will be made most evident. Now the justice of God in punishing wicked men, and especially in the degree of their punishment, is often blasphemously called in question. But it will be made clear and apparent to all; their own consciences will tell them that the sentence is just, and all cavils will be put to silence.

So those that shall be justified, shall be most justly adjudged to eternal life. Although they also were great sinners, and deserved eternal death; yet it will not be against justice or the law, to justify them, they will be in Christ. But the acquitting of them will be but giving the reward merited by Christ's righteousness, Rom. iii. 26. *That God may be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.*

Christ will judge the world in righteousness, particularly as he will give to every one a *due proportion* either of reward or punishment, according to the various characters of those who shall be judged. The punishments shall be duly proportioned to the number and aggravations of the sins of the wicked; and the rewards of the righteous shall be duly proportioned to the

number of their holy acts and affections, and also to the degree of virtue implied in them.—I would observe further,

1. That Christ cannot fail of being just in judging, through *mistake*. He cannot take some to be sincere and godly, who are not so, nor others to be hypocrites, who are really sincere. His eyes are as a flame of fire and he searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men. He can never err in determining what is justice in particular cases, as human judges often do. Nor can he be blinded by prejudice, as human judges are very liable to be. Deut. x. 17. *He regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward.* It is impossible he should be deceived by the excuses, and false colours, and pleas of the wicked, as human judges very commonly are. It is equally impossible that he should err, in assigning to every one his proper proportion of reward or punishment, according to his wickedness or good works. His knowledge being infinite, will effectually guard him against all these, and other such errors.

2. He cannot fail of judging righteously through an *unrighteous* disposition; for he is infinitely just and holy in his nature. Deut. xxxii. 4. *He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.* It is not possible that an infinitely powerful, self-sufficient being should be under any temptation to injustice. Nor is it possible that an infinitely wise being, who knoweth all things, should not choose justice. For he who perfectly knows all things, perfectly knows how much more amiable justice is than injustice; and therefore must choose it.

SECT. VI.

Those things which will immediately follow the day of judgment.

1. After the sentence shall have been pronounced, and the saints shall have ascended with Christ into glory, this world will be dissolved by fire: the conflagration will immediately succeed the judgment. When an end shall have been put to the present state of mankind, this world, which was the place of their habitation during that state, will be destroyed, there being no further use for it. This earth which had been the stage upon which so many scenes had been acted, upon which there had been so many great and famous kingdoms and large cities; where there had been so many wars, so much trade and business carried on for so many ages; shall then be destroyed. These continents, these islands, these seas and rivers, these mountains and vallies, shall be seen no more at all: all shall be destroyed by devouring flames. This we are plainly taught in the word of God. 2 Pet. iii. 7. "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved un-

to fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. v. 10. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night: in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall beburnt up. v. 12. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

2. Both the misery of the wicked and the happiness of the saints will be increased, beyond what shall be before the judgment. The misery of the wicked will be increased, as they will be tormented not only in their souls, but also in their bodies, which will be prepared both to receive and administer torment to their souls. There will, doubtless, then be the like connexion between soul and body, as there is now; and, therefore, the pains and torments of the one will affect the other. And why may we not suppose, that their torments will be increased as well as those of the devils? Concerning them, we are informed, (Jam. ii. 19,) that they believe there is one God, and tremble in the belief; expecting, no doubt, that he will inflict upon them, in due time, more sevère torments than even those which they now suffer. We are also informed, that they are bound *in chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;* and *unto the judgment of the great day;* (2 Pet. ii. 4. and Jude 6.) which implies, that their full punishment is not yet executed upon them, but that they are now reserved as prisoners in hell, to receive their just recompense on the day of judgment. Hence it was, that they thought Christ was *come to torment them before the time.* Matt. viii. 29. Thus the punishment, neither of wicked men, nor devils, will be complete, before the final judgment.

No more will the happiness of the saints be complete before that time. Therefore, we are, in the New Testament, so often encouraged with promises of the resurrection of the dead, and of the day when Christ shall come the second time. These things are spoken of as the great objects of the expectation and hope of Christians. A state of separation of soul and body is to men an unnatural state. Therefore, when the bodies of the saints shall be raised from the dead, and their souls shall be again united to them, as their state will be more natural, so, doubtless, it will be more happy. Their bodies will be *glorious* bodies, and prepared to administer as much to their happiness, as the bodies of the wicked will be to administer to their misery.

We may, with good reason, suppose the accession of happiness to the souls of the saints will be great, since the occasion is represented as the marriage of the church and the Lamb; Rev. xix. 7. *The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.* Their joy will then be increased,

because they will have new arguments of joy. The body of Christ will then be perfect, the church will be complete: all the parts of it will have come into existence, which will not be the case before the end of the world: no parts of it will be under sin or affliction: all the members of it will be in a perfect state; and they shall all be together by themselves, none being mixed with ungodly men. Then the church will be as a bride, adorned for her husband, and, therefore, she will exceedingly rejoice.

Then, also, the Mediator will have fully accomplished his work. He will then have destroyed, and will triumph over, all his enemies. Then Christ will have fully obtained his reward, and fully accomplished the design which was in his heart from all eternity. For these reasons, Christ himself will greatly rejoice, and his members must needs proportionably rejoice with him. Then God will have obtained the end of all the great works, which he hath been doing from the beginning of the world. All the designs of God will be unfolded in their events; then his marvellous contrivance in his hidden, intricate, and inexplicable works, will appear, the ends being obtained. Then the works of God being perfected, the divine glory will more abundantly appear. These things will cause a great accession of happiness to the saints, who shall behold them. Then God will have fully glorified himself, his Son, and his elect; then he will see that all is very good, and will entirely rejoice in his own works. At the same time, the saints, also, viewing the works of God brought thus to perfection, will rejoice in the view, and receive from it a large accession of happiness.

Then God will make more abundant manifestations of his glory, and of the glory of his Son; then he will more plentifully pour out his spirit, and make answerable additions to the glory of the saints; and, by means of all these, will so increase the happiness of the saints, as shall be suitable to the commencement of the ultimate and most perfect state of things, and to such a joyful occasion, the completion of all things. In this glory and happiness, will the saints remain for ever and ever.

SECT. VII.

The uses to which this doctrine is applicable.

I. The *first use* proper to be made of this doctrine, is of *instruction*. Hence many of the mysteries of Divine Providence may be unfolded. There are many things in the dealings of God towards the children of men, which appear very mysterious, if we view them without having an eye to this last judgment, which, yet, if we consider this judgment, have no difficulty in them. As,

1. That God suffers the wicked to live and prosper in the world. The infinitely holy and wise Creator and Governor of the world, must necessarily hate wickedness; yet we see many wicked men spreading themselves as a green bay-tree; they live with impunity; things seem to go well with them, and the world smiles upon them. Many who have not been fit to live, who have held God and religion in the greatest contempt, who have been open enemies to all that is good; who, by their wickedness, have been the pests of mankind; many cruel tyrants, whose barbarities have been such as would even fill one with horror to hear or read of them; yet have lived in great wealth and outward glory; have reigned over great and mighty kingdoms and empires, and have been honoured as a sort of earthly gods.

Now, it is very mysterious, that the holy and righteous Governor of the world, whose eye beholds all the children of men, should suffer it so to be, unless we look forward to the day of judgment; and then the mystery is unravelled. For, although God, for the present, keeps silence, and seems to let them alone, yet then he will give suitable manifestations of his displeasure against their wickedness; they shall then receive condign punishment. The saints under the Old Testament were much stumbled at these dispensations of Providence, as you may see in Job, ch. xxi. and Psal. lxxiii. and Jer. ch. xii. The difficulty to them was so great, because, then, a future state, and a day of judgment, were not revealed with that clearness with which they are now.

2. God sometimes suffers some of the best of men to be in great affliction, poverty, and persecution. The *wicked* rule, while *they* are subject; the wicked are the head, and they are the tail; the wicked domineer, while they serve, and are oppressed, yea are trampled under their feet, as the mire of the streets. These things are very common, yet they seem to imply great confusion. When the wicked are exalted to power and authority, and the godly are oppressed by them, things are quite out of joint: Prov. xx. 26. *A righteous man falling down before the wicked, is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.* Sometimes, one wicked man makes many hundreds, yea thousands, of precious saints, a sacrifice to his lust and cruelty, or to his enmity against virtue and the truth, and puts them to death for no other reason but that for which they are especially to be esteemed and commended.

Now, if we look no further than to the present state, these things appear strange and unaccountable. But we ought not to confine our views within such narrow limits. When God shall have put an end to the present state, these things shall all be brought to rights. Though God suffers things to be so for the present, yet they shall not proceed in this course alway; com-

paratively speaking, the present state of things is *but for a moment*. When all shall be settled and fixed by a divine judgment, the righteous shall be exalted, honoured, and rewarded, and the wicked shall be depressed, and put under their feet. However the wicked now prevail against the righteous, yet the righteous shall, at last, have the ascendant, shall come off conquerors, and shall see the just vengeance of God executed upon those who now hate and persecute them.

3. It is another mystery of providence, that God suffers so much public injustice to take place in the world. There are not only private wrongs, which in this state pass unsettled, but many public wrongs, wrongs done by men acting in a public character, and wrongs which affect nations, kingdoms, and other public bodies of men. Many suffer by men in public offices, from whom there is no refuge, from whose decisions there is no appeal. Now it seems a mystery, that these things are tolerated, when he that is rightfully the Supreme Judge and Governor of the world is perfectly just; but, at the final judgment, all these wrongs shall be adjusted, as well as those of a more private nature.

II. Our *second use* of this subject shall be to apply it to the *awakening* of sinners. You that have not the fear of God before your eyes, that are not afraid to sin against him, consider seriously what you have heard concerning the day of judgment. Although these things be now future and unseen, yet they are real and certain. If you now be left to yourselves, if God keep silence, and judgment be not speedily executed, it is not because God is regardless how you live, and how you behave yourselves. Now indeed God is invisible to you, and his wrath is invisible; but at the day of judgment, you yourselves shall see him with your bodily eyes: you shall not then be able to keep out of his sight, or to avoid seeing him: Rev. i. 7. "Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." You shall see him coming in the clouds of heaven; your ears shall hear the last trumpet, that dreadful sound, the voice of the archangel; your eyes shall see your judge sitting on the throne, they shall see those manifestations of wrath which there will be in his countenance; your ears shall hear him pronounce the sentence.

Seriously consider, if you live in the ways of sin, and appear at that day with the guilt of it upon you, how you will be able to endure the sight or the hearing of these things, and whether horror and amazement will not be likely to seize you, when you shall see the judge descending, and hear the trump of God. What account will you be able to give, when it shall be inquired of you, why you led such a sinful wicked life? What will you be able to say for yourselves, when it shall be asked, why you

neglected such and such particular duties, as the duty of secret prayer, for instance? or why you have habitually practised such and such particular sins or lusts? Although you be so careless of your conduct and manner of life, make so light of sin, and proceed in it so freely, with little or no dread or remorse; yet you must give an account of every sin that you commit, of every idle word that you speak, and of every sinful thought of your hearts. Every time you deviate from the rules of justice, of temperance, or of charity; every time you indulge any lust, whether secretly or openly, you must give an account of it: it will never be forgotten, it stands written in that book which will be opened on that day.

Consider the rule you will be judged by. It is the perfect rule of the divine law, which is exceeding strict, and exceeding broad. And how will you ever be able to answer the demands of this law?—Consider also,

1. That the judge will be your *supreme* judge. You will have no opportunity to appeal from his decision. This is often the case in this world; when we are dissatisfied with the decisions of a judge, we often may appeal to a higher, a more knowing, or a more just judicatory. But no such appeal can be made from our Divine Judge; no such indulgence will be allowed: or if it were allowed, there is no superior judge to whom the appeal should be made. By his decision, therefore, you must abide.

2. The judge will be *omnipotent*. Were he a mere man, like yourselves, however he might judge and determine, you might resist, and by the help of others, if not by your own strength, prevent or elude the execution of the judgment. But the judge being omnipotent, this is utterly impossible. In vain is all resistance, either by yourselves, or by whatever help you can obtain: "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished," Prov. xi. 21. As well might you "set the briers and thorns in battle against God." Isa. xxvii. 4.

3. The judge will be *inexorable*. Human judges may be prevailed upon to reverse their sentence, or at least to remit something of its severity. But in vain will be all your entreaties, all your cries and tears to this effect, with the great Judge of the world. Now indeed he inclines his ear, and is ready to hear the prayers, cries, and entreaties of all mankind; but then the day of grace will be past, and the door of mercy be shut: then although ye spread forth your hands, yet the judge will hide his eyes from you; yea, though ye make many prayers, he will not hear: Isa. i. 15. Then the judge will deal in fury: his eye shall not spare, neither will he have pity: and though ye cry in his ears with a loud voice, yet will he not hear you: Ezek. viii. 18. And you will find no place of repentance in God, though ye seek it carefully with tears.

4. The Judge at that time will not mix mercy with justice. The time for mercy to be shown to sinners will then be past. Christ will then appear in another character than that of the merciful Saviour. Having laid aside the inviting attributes of grace and mercy, he will clothe himself with justice and vengeance. He will not only, in general, exact of sinners the demands of the law, but he will exact the whole, without any abatement: he will exact the very uttermost farthing. Matt. v. 26. Then Christ will come to fulfil that in Rev. xiv. 10. "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation." The punishment threatened to ungodly men is *without any pity*: see Ezek. v. 11. "Neither shall mine eye spare; neither will I have any pity." Here all judgments have a mixture of mercy; but the wrath of God will be poured out upon the wicked without mixture, and vengeance will have its full weight.

III. I shall apply myself *thirdly*, to several *different characters* of men.

1. To those who live in secret wickedness. Let such consider, that for all these things God will bring them into judgment. Secrecy is your temptation. Promising yourselves this, you practise many things, you indulge many lusts, under the covert of darkness, and in secret corners, which you would be ashamed to do in the light of the sun, and before the world. But this temptation is entirely groundless. All your secret abominations are even now perfectly known to God, and will also hereafter be made known both to angels and men. Luke xii. 2, 3. "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light: and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops."

Before human judges are brought only those things which are known; but before this judge shall be brought the most *hidden things of darkness, and even the counsels of the heart*, 1 Cor. iv. 5. All your secret uncleanness, all your secret fraud and injustice, all your lascivious desires, wishes, and designs, all your inward covetousness, which is idolatry, all your malicious, envious, and revengeful thoughts and purposes, whether brought forth into practice or not, shall then be made manifest, and you shall be judged according to them. Of these things, however secret, there will be need of no other evidence than the testimony of God and of your own consciences.

2. To such as are not just and upright in their dealings with their fellow men. Consider that all your dealings with men must be tried, must be brought forth into judgment, and there compared with the rules of the word of God. All your actions must be judged according to those things which are

found written in the book of the word of God. If your ways of dealing with men shall not agree with those rules of righteousness, they will be condemned. Now, the word of God directs us to practise entire justice; *That which is altogether just shalt thou follow.* Deut. xvi. 20. and to do to others as we would they should do to us. But how many are there, whose dealings with their fellow-men, if strictly tried by these rules, would not stand the test?

God hath in his word, forbidden all deceit and fraud in our dealings one with another, Lev. xi. 13. He hath forbidden us to oppress one another, Lev. xxv. 14. But how frequent are practices contrary to those rules, and which will not bear to be tried by them? How common are fraud and trickishness in trade? How will men endeavour to lead on those with whom they trade in the dark, that so they may make their advantage? Yea, lying in trading is too common a thing among us. How common are such things as that mentioned, Prov. xx. 14. *It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.*

Many men will take the advantage of another's ignorance to advance their own gain, to his wrong; yea, they seem not to scruple such practices. Beside downright lying, men have many ways of blinding and deceiving one another in trade, which are by no means right in the sight of God, and will appear to be very unjust, when they shall be tried by the rule of God's word at the day of judgment. And how common a thing is oppression or extortion, in taking any advantage that men can by any means obtain, to get the utmost possible of their neighbour for what they have to dispose of, and their neighbour needs!

Let such consider, that there is a God in heaven, who beholds them, and sees how they conduct themselves in their daily traffic with one another; and that he will try their works another day. Justice shall assuredly take place at last. The righteous Governor of the world will not suffer injustice without control; he will control and rectify it, by returning the injury upon the head of the injurer: Matt. vii. 2. *With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

3. To those who plead for the lawfulness of practices generally condemned by God's people. You who do this, consider that your practices must be tried at the day of judgment. Consider, whether or no they are likely to be approved by the most holy judge at that day: Prov. v. 21. *The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord; and he pondereth all his goings.* However, by your carnal reasonings, you may deceive your own hearts, yet you will not be able to deceive the Judge, he will not hearken to your excuses, but will try your ways by the rule; he will know whether they be straight or crooked.

When you plead for these and those liberties which you take, let it be considered, whether they be likely to be allowed of by the Judge at the last great day. Will they bear to be tried by his eyes, which are purer than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity?

4. To those who are wont to excuse their wickedness.—Will the excuses which you make for yourselves be accepted at the day of judgment? If you excuse yourselves to your own consciences, by saying, that you were under such and such temptations which you could not withstand; that corrupt nature prevailed, and you could not overcome it; that it would have been so and so to your damage, if you had done otherwise; that if you had done such a duty, you would have brought yourselves into difficulty, would have incurred the displeasure of such and such friends, or would have been despised and laughed at; or, if you say, you did no more than it was the common custom to do, no more than many godly men have done, no more than certain persons of good reputation now practice; that if you had done otherwise, you would have been singular; if these be your excuses for the sins which you commit, or for the duties which you neglect, let me ask you, will they appear sufficient when they shall be examined at the day of judgment?

5. To those who live in impenitence and unbelief. There are some persons who live in no open vice, and, perhaps, conscientiously avoid secret immorality, who yet live in impenitence and unbelief. They are, indeed, called upon *to repent and believe the gospel*, to forsake their evil ways and *thoughts*, and to return to God, that he may have mercy on them; to come unto Christ, *labouring*, and *heavy-laden with sin*, that they may obtain *rest* of him; and are assured, that if they *believe, they shall be saved;* and that if they *believe not, they shall be damned;* and all the most powerful motives are set before them, to induce them to comply with these exhortations, especially those drawn from the eternal world; yet they persist in sin, they remain impenitent and unhumbled; they will not come unto Christ, that they may have life.

Now, such men shall be brought into judgment for their conduct, as well as more gross sinners. Nor will they be any more able to stand in the judgment than the other. They resist the most powerful means of grace; go on in sin against the clear light of the gospel; refuse to hearken to the kindest calls and invitations; reject the most amiable Saviour, the Judge himself; and despise the free offers of eternal life, glory, and felicity. And how will they be able to answer for these things at the tribunal of Christ?

IV. If there be a day of judgment appointed, then let all be very strict in trying their own sincerity. God, on that day, will discover the secrets of all hearts. The judgment of that

day will be like the fire, which burns up whatsoever is not true gold; wood, hay, stubble, and dross, shall be all consumed by the scorching fire of that day. The judge will be like a refiner's fire, and fuller's soap, which will cleanse away all filthiness, however it may be coloured over: Mal. iii. 2. "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap;" and chap. iv. 1—"For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts."

There are multitudes of men, that wear the guise of saints, appear like saints, and their state, both in their own eyes, and in the eyes of their neighbours, is good. They have sheep's clothing. But no disguise can hide them from the eyes of the Judge of the world. His eyes are as a flame of fire: they search the hearts, and try the reins of the children of men. He will see whether they be sound at heart; he will see from what principles they have acted. A fair show will, in no degree, deceive him, as it doth men in the present state. It will signify nothing to say, "Lord, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence; and in thy name have we cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works." It will signify nothing to pretend to a great deal of comfort and joy, and to the experience of great religious affections, and to your having done many things in religion and morality, unless you have some greater evidences of sincerity.

Wherefore, let every one take heed that he be not deceived concerning himself; and that he depend not on that which will not bear examination at the day of judgment. Be not contented with this, that you have the judgment of men, the judgment of godly men, or that of ministers, in your favour. Consider, that they are not to be your judges at last. Take occasion, frequently, to compare your hearts with the word of God; that is the rule by which you are to be finally tried and judged. And try yourselves by your works, by which, also, you must be tried at last. Inquire whether you lead holy Christian lives, whether you perform universal and unconditional obedience to all God's commands, and whether you do it from a truly gracious respect to God.

Also frequently beg of God, the judge, that he would search you, try you now, and discover you to yourselves, that you may see if you be insincere in religion; and that he would lead you in the way everlasting. Beg of God, that if you be not upon a good foundation, he would unsettle you, and fix you upon the sure foundation. The example of the Psalmist in this is worthy of imitation: Psal. xxvi. 1, 2. "Judge me, O Lord, examine me, and prove me; try my reins and mine heart:" and Psal.

cxxxix. 23, 24. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." God will search us hereafter, and discover what we are, both to ourselves and to all the world; let us pray that he would search us, and discover our hearts to us now. We have need of divine help in this matter; for the heart is deceitful above all things.

V. If God hath appointed a day to judge the world, let us judge and condemn ourselves for our sins. This we must do, if we would not be judged and condemned for them on that day. If we would escape condemnation, we must see that we justly may be condemned; we must be so sensible of our vileness and guilt, as to see that we deserve all that condemnation and punishment which are threatened; and that we are in the hands of God, who is the sovereign disposer of us, and will do with us as seemeth to himself good. Let us therefore often reflect on our sins, confess them before God, condemn and abhor ourselves, be truly humbled, and repent in dust and ashes.

VI. If these things be so, let us by no means be forward to judge others. Some are forward to judge others, to judge their hearts both in general and upon particular occasions, to determine as to the principles, motives and ends of their actions. But this is to assume the province of God, and to set up ourselves as lords and judges. Rom. xiv. 4. "Who art thou, that thou judgest another man's servant?" James iv. 11. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren." He that speaketh evil of his brother and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law." To be thus disposed to judge and act censoriously towards others, is the way to be judged and condemned ourselves. Matt. vii. 1, 2. "Judge not that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

VII. This doctrine affords matter of great consolation to the godly. This day of judgment, which is so terrible to ungodly men, affords no ground of terror to you, but abundant ground of joy and satisfaction. For though you now meet with more affliction and trouble than most wicked men, yet on that day you shall be delivered from all afflictions, and from all trouble. If you be unjustly treated by wicked men, and abused by them, what a comfort is it to the injured, that they may appeal to God, who judgeth righteously. The Psalmist used often to comfort himself with this.

Upon these accounts the saints have reason to love the appearing of Jesus Christ. 2 Tim. iv. 8. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but to all those that love his appearing." This is to the saints

a blessed hope. Tit. ii. 13. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." This day may well be the object of their eager desire, and when they hear of Christ's coming to judgment, they may well say, *Even so come, Lord Jesus.* Rev. xxii. 20. It will be the most glorious day that ever the saints saw; it will be so both to those who shall die, and whose souls shall go to heaven, and to those who shall then be found alive on earth: it will be the wedding-day of the church. Surely then in the consideration of the approach of this day, there is ground of great consolation to the saints.

SERMON IX.

SELF-FLATTERIES;—OR, THE VAIN SELF-FLATTERIES OF THE SINNER.

Psal. xxxvi. 2.

For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.

In the foregoing verse, David says, "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes:" that is, when he saw that the wicked went on in sin, in an allowed way of wickedness, it convinced him that they were not afraid of those terrible judgments, and of that wrath with which God hath threatened sinners. If the sinner were afraid of these, he could never go on so securely in sin as he doth.

It was a strange thing that men, who enjoyed such light as they did in the land of Israel, who read and heard those many awful threatenings which were written in the book of the law, should not be afraid to go on in sin. But, saith the Psalmist, *They flatter themselves in their own eyes:* they have something or other which they make a foundation of encouragement, whereby they persuade themselves that they shall escape those judgments: and that makes them put far away the evil day.

In this manner the sinner proceeds, *until his iniquity be found to be hateful;* that is, until he finds by experience that it is a more dreadful thing to sin against God, and break his holy commands, than he imagined. He thinks sin to be sweet, and hides it as a sweet morsel under his tongue; he loves it

and flatters himself in it, till at length he finds by experience, that it is bitter as gall and wormwood. Though he thinks the commission of sin to be lovely, yet he will find the fruit of it to be hateful, and what he cannot endure. Prov. xxiii. 32. "At last it will bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder."

Here observe, the subject spoken of is the *wicked man*, of whom the Psalmist had been speaking in the foregoing verse. His action in *flattering himself in his own eyes;* i. e. he makes himself and his case to appear to himself, or in his own eyes, better than it is.

How long he continues so to do, *until his iniquity be found to be hateful.* Which may be taken for, either his *sin itself*, as the wicked will see how odious sin is to God, when he shall feel the effects of his hatred, and how hateful to angels and saints; or rather, the *cause* is here put for the effect, the tree for its fruit, and he will find his iniquity to be hateful, as he will find the hatefulness and feel the terribleness of the *fruit* of his iniquity. Hence it appears, that *Wicked men generally flatter themselves with hopes of escaping punishment, till it actually comes upon them.*

There are but few sinners who despair, who give up the cause, and conclude within themselves, that they shall go to hell; yet there are but few who do not go to hell. It is to be feared that men go to hell every day out of this country; yet very few of them suffer themselves to believe, that they are in any great danger of that punishment. They go on sinning, and thus travelling in the direct road to the pit; yet they persuade themselves that they shall never fall into it.

SECT. I.

Sinners flatter themselves with the hope of impunity.

We are so taught in the word of God, Deut. xxix. 18, 19. "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God. Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood, and it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he *bless himself in his heart*, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." Where it is supposed, that they whose hearts turn away from God, and are roots that bear gall and wormwood, generally bless themselves in their hearts, saying, *We shall have peace.*

See also Psalm xlix, 17, 18. "When he dieth, he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him, though, whilst he lived, he *blessed his soul.*" And Psalm l. 21. "These things thou hast done, and I kept silence; thou

thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."

It is very evident, that sinners flatter themselves that they shall escape punishment, otherwise they would be in dreadful and continual distress; they could never live so cheerfully as they now do. Their lives would be filled with sorrow and mourning, and they would be in continual uneasiness and distress, as much as those that are exercised with some violent pain of body. But it is apparent that men are careless and secure; they are not much concerned about future punishment, and they cheerfully pursue their business and recreations. Therefore they undoubtedly *flatter* themselves, that they shall not be eternally miserable in hell, as they are threatened in the word of God.

It is evident that they flatter themselves with hopes that they shall escape punishment, otherwise they would certainly be restrained, at least from many of those sins in which they now live: they would not proceed in wilful courses of sin. The transgression of the wicked convinced the Psalmist, and is enough to convince every one, that there is no fear of God before his eyes, and that he flatters himself in his own eyes. It would be impossible for men allowedly to do those very things which they know are threatened with everlasting destruction, if they did not some way encourage themselves they should nevertheless escape that destruction.

SECT. II.

Some of the various Ways wherein Sinners flatter themselves in their own Eyes.

1. Some flatter themselves with a secret hope, that there is no such thing as *another world*. They hear a great deal of preaching, and a great deal of talk about hell, and the eternal judgment; but those things do not seem to them to be real. They never saw hell, nor the devils and damned spirits; and therefore are ready to say within themselves, How do I know that there is any such thing as another world? When the beasts die, there is an end of them, and how do I know but that it will be so with me! Perhaps all these things are nothing but the inventions of men, nothing but cunningly-devised fables.

Such thoughts are apt to rise in the minds of sinners, and the devil sets in to enforce them. Such thoughts are an ease to them; therefore they *wish* they were true, and that makes them the more ready to think that they *are* so. So that they are hardened in the way of sin, by infidelity and atheistical thoughts. Psalm xiv. 1. "The fool hath said in his heart,

There is no God." Psalm xciv. 6, 7. "They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, The Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob regard it."

2. Some flatter themselves, that *death* is a great way off, and that they shall, hereafter, have much opportunity to seek salvation; and they think, if they earnestly seek it, though it be a great while hence, they shall obtain. Although they see no reason to conclude that they shall live long, and perhaps they do not positively conclude that they shall, yet it doth not come into their minds, that their lives are really uncertain, and that it is doubtful whether they will live another year. Such a thought as this doth not take any hold of them. And, although they do not absolutely determine that they shall live to old age, or to middle age, yet they secretly flatter themselves with such an imagination. They are disposed to believe so, they act upon it, and run the venture.

Men believe, that things will be as they choose to have them, without reason, and sometimes without the appearance of reason, as is most apparent in this case. Psalm xlix. 11. "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names."—The prepossession and desire of men to have it so, is the principal thing that makes them so believe. However, there are several other things which they use as arguments to flatter themselves. Perhaps they think, that since they are at present in health, or in youth, or that since they are useful men, do a great deal of good, and both themselves and others pray for the continuance of their lives; they are not likely to be removed by death very soon.—If they live many years in the world, they think it very probable that they shall be converted before they die: as they expect, hereafter, to have much more convenient opportunities to become converted, than they have now. And, by some means or other, they think they shall get through their work before they arrive at old age.

3. Some flatter themselves, that they lead *moral* and orderly lives, and therefore think that they shall not be damned.—They think, within themselves, that they live not in any vice, that they take care to wrong no man, are just and honest dealers; that they are not addicted to hard drinking, or to uncleanness, or to bad language; that they keep the Sabbath strictly; are constant attendants on the public worship, and maintain the worship of God in their families. Therefore, they hope, that God will not cast them into hell. They see not why God should be so angry with them as that would imply, seeing they are so orderly and regular in their walk! they see not that they have done enough to anger him to that degree. And if they

have angered him, they imagine they have also done a great deal to pacify him.

If they be not as yet converted, and it be necessary that they should experience any other conversion, in order to their salvation, they hope that their orderly and strict lives will move God to give them converting grace. They hope, that surely God will not see those, that live as they do, go to hell. Thus they flatter themselves, as those (Luke xviii. 9,) "that trusted in themselves that they were righteous."

4. Some make the *advantages* under which they live an occasion of self-flattery. They flatter themselves, that they live in a place where the gospel is powerfully preached, and among a religious people, where many have been converted; and they think it will be much easier for them to be saved on that account. Thus they abuse the grace of God to their destruction; they do that which the scriptures call *despising the riches of God's goodness;* Rom. ii. 4. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

Some flatter themselves, that they are born of godly parents, who are dear to God, who have often and earnestly prayed for them, and hope that their prayers will be heard; and that encourages them to go on in the way of neglecting their souls. The Jews had great dependence upon this, that they were the children of Abraham; John viii. 33, they make their boast, "We be Abraham's seed;" and in verse 39, "Abraham is our father."

5. Some flatter themselves with their own *intentions.* They intend to give themselves liberty for a while longer, and *then* to reform. Though now they neglect their souls, and are going on in sin, yet they intend, ere long, to bestir themselves, to leave off their sins, and to set themselves to seek God. They hear that there is great encouragement for those who earnestly seek God, that they shall find him. So they intend to do; they propose to seek with a great deal of earnestness. They are told, that there are many who seek to enter the kingdom of heaven, who shall not be able; but they intend, not only to seek, but *to strive.* However, for the present, they allow themselves in their ease, sloth, and pleasure, minding only earthly things.

Or, if they should be seized with some mortal distemper, and should draw near to the grave, before the time which they lay out in their minds for reformation, they think how earnestly they would pray and cry to God for mercy: and, as they hear God is a merciful God, who taketh no delight in the death of sinners, they hence flatter themselves that they shall move God to have pity on them.

There are but few sinners, knowing themselves to be such, who have not intentions of future repentance and reformation; but few who do not flatter themselves, that they shall in good earnest seek God some time or other. Hell is full of *good intenders*, who never proved to be *true performers*: Acts xxiv. 25. "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

6. There are some who flatter themselves, that they *do*, and have *done*, a great deal for their salvation, and therefore hope they shall obtain; when indeed they neither do what they ought to do, nor what they might do even in their present state of unregeneracy; nor are they in any likely way to be converted. They think they are striving, when they actually neglect many moral and some instituted duties; nor do they exert themselves as if it were for their lives; they are not *violent* for the kingdom of heaven.

There are doubtless many such; many are concerned, and are seeking, and do many things, and think that they are in a very fair way to obtain the kingdom of God; yet there is great danger that they will prove at last to be some of the foolish virgins, and be found without oil in their vessels.

7. Some hope by their strivings to obtain salvation of *themselves*. They have a secret imagination, that they shall by degrees, work in themselves sorrow and repentance of sin, and love towards God and Jesus Christ. Their striving is not so much an earnest seeking to God, as a striving to do themselves that which is the work of God. Many who are now seeking have this imagination; they labour, read, pray, hear sermons, and go to private meetings, with the view of making themselves holy, and of working in themselves holy affections.

Many who only project and design to turn to God hereafter, are apt to think that it is an easy thing to be converted: that it is a thing which will be in their own power at any time, when they shall earnestly set themselves to it.

8. Some sinners flatter themselves, that they are *already* converted. They sit down and rest in a false hope, persuading themselves that all their sins are pardoned: that God loves them; that they shall go to heaven when they die; and that they need trouble themselves no more: Rev. iii. 17. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Sinners very generally go on flattering themselves in some or other of these ways, till their punishment actually overtakes them. These are the baits by which Satan catches souls, and draws them into his snare. They are such self-flatteries as these that keep men from seeing their danger, and that make

them go on securely, "as the bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life."

Those that flatter themselves with hopes of living a great while longer in the world, very commonly continue to do so till death comes. Death comes upon them when they expect it not; they look upon it as a great way off when there is but a step between. They thought not of dying at that time, nor at any time near it. When they were young they proposed to live a good while longer; and if they happen to live till middle age, they still maintain the same thought, that they are not yet near death, and so that thought goes along with them as long as they live, or till they are just about to die.

Men often have a dependence on their own righteousness, and as long as they live are never brought off from it. Multitudes uphold themselves with their own intentions, till all their prospects are dashed in pieces by death. They put off the work which they have to do till such a time; and when that comes, they put it off to another time; until death, which cannot be put off, overtakes them. There are many also that hold a false hope, a persuasion that they belong to God; and as long as they live, by all the marks and signs which are given of a true convert they never will be persuaded to let go their hope, till it is rent from them by death.

Thus men commonly uphold themselves, and make themselves easy, till hell-fire makes them uneasy. Everlasting ruin comes upon them as a snare, and all their hopes are at once cut off, and turned into everlasting despair: 1 Thess. v. 3. "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

SECT. III.

The subject applied.

1. Hence we learn one reason why there are but few saved, and why so many perish from under the gospel. All men know that they must die, and all that sit under the light of the gospel have been told many a time, that after this there is another world; that there are but two states in that other world—a state of eternal happiness, and a state of eternal misery—that there is but one way of escaping the misery and obtaining the blessedness of eternity, which is by obtaining an interest in Christ, through faith in him; and that this life is the only opportunity of obtaining an interest in Christ. Yet men are so much given to flatter themselves in those ways which we

have mentioned, that there are but few that seasonably take care of their salvation. Indeed they cannot but be in some measure concerned about their souls; yet they flatter themselves with one thing or other, so that they are kept steadily and uninterruptedly going on in the broad way to destruction.

2. Hence we may learn the reason why awakening truths of scripture, and awakening sermons, make no more impression upon men. It is in itself a wonderful and surprising thing, that God's denunciations of eternal misery, and threatenings of casting sinners into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever and ever, do not affect them, do not startle them. The truth is, they *flatter* themselves, by such means as we have mentioned, that this dreadful misery is not for *them*; that *they* shall escape it, though multitudes of others are involved in it. They take not these threatenings to themselves; they seem to think that they do not belong to them.

How many are there, who, for all the awakening sermons they have heard, are yet secure in sin! and who, although they are sensible that they are in a Christless condition, and are still going on in sin, yet intend to go to heaven, and expect that by some means or other they shall arrive there. They are often told, that God is very angry with them: yet they think God is a very merciful God, and they shall be able to pacify him. If they be told how uncertain life is, *that* doth not awaken them, because they flatter themselves with long life. If they be told how dangerous it is to delay the business of religion, they promise themselves, that they will hereafter engage in it with more earnestness than others, and so obtain the end, the salvation of their souls. Others, when they are told that many shall seek who shall not be able to obtain, think, surely, that *they*, having done so much for salvation, shall not be denied.

3. Let every sinner examine, whether he do not flatter himself in some of those ways which have been mentioned. What is it in your own minds which makes you think it is safe for you to delay turning to God? What is it that encourages you to run such a venture as you do, by delaying this necessary work? Is it that you hope there is no such state as heaven or hell, and have a suspicion that there is no God? Is it this that makes you secure? or is it that you are not much afraid but that you shall have opportunity enough a great while hence to mind such things? Is it an intention of a future seeking at a more convenient season? and are you persuaded that God will hearken to you then, after you shall have so long turned a deaf ear to his commands and gracious invitations? Are you encouraged to commit sin, because you hope to repent of it? Are you encouraged by the mercy of God to be his

enemies? and do you resolve still to provoke him to anger, because you think he is easily pacified?

Or do you think that your conversion is in your own power, and that you can turn to God when you please? Is it because you have been born of godly parents, that you are so secure? or do you imagine that you are in a fair way to be converted? Do you think that what you have done in religion will engage God to pity you, and that he never can have the heart to condemn one who has lived in so orderly a manner? or do you think that you are indeed converted already? and doth that encourage you to take a liberty in sinning? Or are you secure, because you are so stupid as to think nothing about these things? Do you let these concerns wholly alone, and scarcely ever think at all how it will be with you after you are dead?—Certainly it must be one or more of these things which keeps you in your security, and encourages you to go on in sin. Examine, therefore, and see which of them it is.

4. Be persuaded to leave off thus flattering yourselves in your own eyes. You are here informed, that those who do as you do, commonly continue so doing till their punishment actually comes upon them. Thereby you may be convinced of the vanity of all such flatteries. Be afraid of that which you are sure is the devil's bait: "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." Prov. i. 17.

You are not only told in the scriptures, that sinners are generally thus allured to hell, but your own reason may convince you that it is so. For doubtless other sinners have as much ground to hope an escape of punishment as you; and it is evident, that they generally do hope to escape. Men under the gospel almost universally think they shall not go to hell; if it were otherwise, they could have no peace or comfort in the world. Yet what multitudes have we reason to conclude go down from under the preaching of the gospel to the pit of destruction! Now, this is surely enough to convince any sober prudent person, of the folly of such flattery, and of the folly of every one that doth not immediately set about this great work with his might. If you could have access to the damned, you would hear many of them curse themselves, for thus flattering themselves while they lived in this world; and you would have the same doctrine preached to you by their wailings and yellings which is now delivered to you.

If your temptation to security be unbelief of the fundamental doctrines of religion, such as the being of God, of another world, and an eternal judgment, you may consider, that though that makes you secure at present, yet it will not do always, it will not stand by you when you come to die. The fool often in health saith, *There is no God;* but when he comes to die, he cannot rest in any such supposition. Then he is

generally so much convinced in his own conscience, that there is a God, that he is in dreadful amazement for fear of his eternal wrath. It is folly, therefore, to flatter yourselves with any supposition now, which you will not then be able to hold. If you depend on long life, consider how many who have depended on the same thing, and had as much reason to depend on it as you, have died within your remembrance.

Is it because you are outwardly of an orderly life and conversation, that you think you shall be saved? How unreasonable is it to suppose that God should be so obliged by those actions, which he knows are not done from the least respect or regard to him, but wholly with a private view! Is it because you are under great advantages that you are not much afraid but that you shall some time or other be converted, and therefore neglect yourselves and your spiritual interests? And were not the people of Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum, under as great advantages as you, when Christ himself preached the Gospel to them, almost continually, and wrought such a multitude of miracles among them? Yet he says, that it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for those cities.

Do you expect you shall be saved, however you neglect yourselves, because you were born of godly parents? Hear what Christ saith, Matt. iii. 9. "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." Do you flatter yourselves that you shall obtain mercy, though others do not, because you intend hereafter to seek it more earnestly than others? Yet you deceive yourselves, if you think that you intend better than many of those others, or better than many who are now in hell once intended.

If you think you are in a way of earnest seeking, consider whether or no you do not mind other things yet more? If you imagine that you have it in your own power to work yourselves up to repentance, consider that you must assuredly give up that imagination, before you can have repentance wrought in you. If you think yourselves already converted, and that encourages you to give yourselves the greater liberty in sinning, this is a certain sign that you are not converted.

Wherefore abandon all these ways of flattering yourselves, no longer follow the devil's bait; and let nothing encourage you to go on in sin; but immediately and henceforth seek God with all your heart, and soul, and strength.

SERMON X.*

WICKED MEN USEFUL IN THEIR DESTRUCTION ONLY.

EZEK. xv. 2—4.

Son of man, What is the vine-tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burnt; is it meet for any work?

THE visible church of God is here compared to the vine-tree. as is evident by God's own explanation of the allegory, in ver. 6, 7, and 8. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, As the vine-tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem," &c. And it may be understood of mankind in general. So Deut xxxii. 32. "Their vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall." And especially his professing people. Psalm lxxx. 8. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt;" ver. 14. "Look down from heaven, behold, and visit this vine." And Cant ii. 15. "The foxes that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes." Isa. v. "My well-beloved hath a vineyard, and he planted it with the choicest vine." Jer. ii. 21. "I had planted thee a noble vine." Hos. x. 1 "Israel is an empty vine." So in chap. xv. of John, visible Christians are compared to *the branches of a vine.*

Man is very fitly represented by the vine. The weakness and dependence of the vine on other things which support it, well represents to us what a poor, feeble dependent creature

* Dated July, 1744.

man is, and how, if left to himself, he falls into mischief, and cannot help himself. The visible people of God are fitly compared to a vine, because of the care and cultivation of the husbandman or vine-dresser. The business of husbandmen in the land of Israel was very much about vines; and the care they exercised to fence them, to defend them, to prune them, to prop them up, and to cultivate them, well represented that merciful care which God exercises towards his visible people.

In the words now read is represented, how wholly useless and unprofitable, even beyond other trees, a vine is, in case of unfruitfulness: "What is a vine-tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?" *i. e.* if it do not bear fruit. Men make much more of a vine than of other trees; they take great care of it, to wall it in, to dig about it, to prune it, and the like. It is much more highly esteemed than one of the trees of the forest; they are despised in comparison with it. And if it bear fruit, it is indeed much preferable to other trees; for the fruit of it yields a noble liquor; as it is said in Jotham's parable, Judg. ix. 13. "And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man?"—But if it bear no fruit it is more unprofitable than the trees of the forest: for the wood of them is good for timber; but the wood of the vine is fit for no work; as in the text, "Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?"—The only thing for which a vine is useful, in case of barrenness, is for fuel: "Behold it is cast into the fire for fuel." It is wholly consumed; no part of it is worth a saving, to make any instrument of it, for any work.

DOCTRINE. If men bring forth no fruit to God, they are wholly useless, unless in their destruction.

For the proof of this doctrine, I shall show,

1. That there can be but two ways in which man can be useful, *viz.* either in *acting*, or in *being acted upon.*

2. That man can no otherwise be useful *actively* than by bringing forth fruit to God.

3. That if he bring not forth fruit to God, there is no other way in which he can be *passively* useful, but in being destroyed.

4. In that way he may be useful without bearing fruit.

I. There are but two ways in which man can be useful, *viz.* either in *acting*, or *being acted upon.* If man be useful, he must be so either actively or passively; there is no medium. What can be more plain, than that if a man do nothing himself,

and nothing be done with him or upon him by any other, he cannot be any way at all useful?—If man do nothing himself to promote the end of his existence; and no other being do any thing with him to promote this end; then nothing will be done to promote this end; and so man must be wholly useless. So that there are but two ways in which man can be useful to any purpose, *viz.* either actively or passively, either in doing something himself, or in being the subject of something done to him.

II. Man cannot be useful *actively*, any otherwise than in bringing forth fruit to God; serving God, and living to his glory. This is the only way wherein he can be useful in doing; and that for this *reason*, that the glory of God is the very thing for which man was made, and to which all other ends are subordinate. Man is not an independent being, but he derives his being from another; and therefore hath his end assigned him by that other: and he who gave him his being, made him for the end now mentioned. This was the very design and aim of the Author of man; this was the work for which he made him, *viz.* to serve and glorify his Maker.—Other creatures, that are inferior, were made for inferior purposes. But man is the highest, and nearest to God, of any in this lower world; and, therefore, his business is with God, although other creatures are made for lower ends. There may be observed a kind of gradual ascent in the order of different creatures, from the meanest clod of earth to man, who hath a rational and immortal soul. A plant, an herb, or tree, is superior in nature to a stone or clod, because it hath a vegetable life. The brute creatures are a degree higher still; for they have sensitive life. But man, having a rational soul, is the highest of this lower creation, and is next to God; therefore, his business is with God.

Things without life, as earth, water, &c. are subservient to things above them, as the grass, herbs, and trees. These vegetables are subservient to that order of creatures which is next above them, the brute creation; they are for food to them. Brute creatures, again, are made for the use and service of the order above them: they are made for the service of mankind. But man being the highest of this lower creation, the next step from him is to God. He, therefore, is made for the service and glory of God. This is the whole work and business of man; it is his highest end, to which all other ends are subordinate.

If it had not been for this end, there never would have been any such creature; there would have been no occasion for it. Other inferior ends may be answered as well, without any such creature as man. There would have been no sort of occasion for making so noble a creature, and enduing him with such faculties, only to enjoy earthly good, to eat and to drink, and to enjoy sensual things. Brute-creatures, without reason,

are capable of these things, as well as man: yea, if no higher end be aimed at than to enjoy sensitive good, reason is rather a hindrance than a help. It doth but render man the more capable of afflicting himself, with care, fears of death, and other future evils; and of vexing himself with many anxieties, from which brute-creatures are wholly free, and, therefore, can gratify their senses with less molestation. Besides, reason doth but make men more capable of molesting and impeding one another in the gratification of their senses. If man have no other end to seek but to gratify his senses, reason is nothing but an impediment.

Therefore, if man be not made to serve and glorify his Creator, it is wholly to no purpose that such a creature is made. Doubtless, then, the all-wise God, who doth all things in infinite wisdom, hath made man for this end. And this is agreeable to what he hath taught us in many places in the scriptures. This is the great end for which man was made, and for which he was made such a creature, having bodily senses and rational powers. For this, is he placed in such circumstances, and the earth is given him for a possession. For this he hath dominion given him over the rest of the terrestrial creatures. For this the sun shines, and the rain falls on him; and the moon and stars are for signs and seasons to him, and the earth yields him her increase. All other ends of man are subordinate to this. There are, indeed, inferior ends, for which man was made. Men were made for one another; for their friends and neighbours, and for the good of the public. But all these inferior ends are designed to be subordinate to the higher end of glorifying God; and, therefore, man cannot be actively useful, otherwise than by actively bringing forth fruit to God. Because, that is not actively useful which doth not actively answer its end: that which doth not *answer its end*, is in vain; for that is the meaning of the proposition, that any thing *is in vain*. So that which doth not actively answer its end, is, as to its own activity, in vain.

That, as to its own activity, is altogether useless, which actively answers only subordinate ends, without answering the ultimate end; because the latter is the end of subordinate ones. Subordinate ends are to no purpose, only as they stand related to the highest end. Therefore, these inferior ends are good for nothing, though they be obtained, unless they also obtain *their* end. Inferior ends are not aimed at for their *own* sake, but only for the sake of that which is ultimate. Therefore, he that fails of this, is as much to no purpose, as if he did not obtain his subordinate end.

I will illustrate this by two or three examples. The subordinate end of the underpinning of a house, is to support it, and the subordinate end of the windows, is to let in the light. But the ultimate end of the whole, is the benefit of the inha-

bitants. Therefore, if the house be never inhabited, the whole is in vain. The underpinning is in vain, though it be ever so strong, and support the building ever so well. The windows also are wholly in vain, though they be ever so large and clear, and though they obtain the subordinate end of letting in the light; they are as much in vain, as if they let in no light.

So the subordinate end of the husbandman in ploughing and sowing, and well manuring his field is, that it may bring forth a crop. But his more ultimate end is, that food may be provided for him and his family. Therefore, though his inferior end be obtained, and his field bring forth ever so good a crop, yet if after all it be consumed by fire, or otherwise destroyed, he ploughed and sowed his field as much in vain, as if the seed had never sprung up.—So if man obtain his subordinate ends ever so fully; yet if he altogether fail of his ultimate end, he is wholly an useless creature. Thus if men be very useful in temporal things to their families, or greatly promote the temporal interest of the neighbourhood, or of the public; yet if no glory be brought to God by it, they are altogether useless. If men actively bring no glory to God, they are as to their own activity, altogether useless, how much soever they may promote the benefit of one another. How much soever one part of mankind may subserve another; yet if the end of the whole be not answered, every part is useless.

Thus if the parts of a clock subserve ever so well one another, mutually to assist each other in their motions; one wheel moving another ever so regularly; yet if the motion never reach the hand or the hammer, it is altogether in vain, as much as if it stood still. So one man was made to be useful to another, and one part of mankind to another; but the use of the whole is to bring glory to God the maker, or else all is in vain.

Although a wicked man may, by being serviceable to good men, do what will be an advantage to them to their bringing forth fruit to God; yet that serviceableness is not what he *aims* at; he doth not look so far for an ultimate end. And however this be obtained, no thanks are due to him; he is only the *occasion*, and not the *designing* cause of it.

The usefulness of such a man, being not designed, is not to be attributed to him, as though it were *his* fruit. He is not useful *as a man*, or as a rational creature, because he is not so designedly. He is useful as things without life may be. Things without life may be useful to put the godly under advantages to bring forth fruit, as the timber and stones with which his house is built, the wool and flax with which he is clothed; but the fruit which is brought forth to God's glory, cannot be said to be the fruit of these lifeless things, but of the godly man

who makes use of them. So it is when wicked men put the godly under advantages to glorify God, as Cyrus, and Artaxerxes, and others have done.

III. If men bring not forth fruit to God, there is no other way in which they can be useful passively, but in being destroyed. They are fit for nothing else.

1. They are not fit to be suffered to continue *always in this world.* It is not fit that this world should be the constant abode of those who bring forth no fruit to God. It is not fit that the barren tree should be allowed always to stand in the vineyard. The husbandman lets it stand for a while, till he digs about it, dungs it, and proves it to be incurable, or till a convenient time to cut it down come; but it is not fit that they who bring forth no fruit to God, should be suffered to live always in a world which is so full of the divine goodness, or that his goodness should be spent upon them for ever.—This world, though fallen, and under a curse, has many streams of divine goodness. But it is not fit that those who bring forth no fruit to God, should always be continued in partaking of these streams. There are three different states; one, wherein is nothing but good, which is heaven; another wherein is a mixture of good and evil, which is the earthly state; and the third, wherein is nothing but evil, which is the state of eternal destruction. Now they that bring forth no fruit to God, are not fit for either of the former.

It is not fit that an unprofitable, unfruitful creature, who will not glorify his Creator, should always live here to consume the fruits of divine bounty: to have the good things of this life spent upon him in vain. While a man lives here, the other creatures are subjected to him. The brute creatures serve him with their labour and with their lives. The sun, moon, and stars; the clouds, fields and trees, all serve him. But why should God always keep his creatures in subjection to that man who will not be subject to him? Why should the creation be always kept in such bondage, as to be subject to wicked men? The creatures indeed are made subject to vanity, God hath subjected them to wicked men, and given them for their use. This however he would not have done, but as it is only for a little while; and the creatures can bear it through the hope of approaching deliverance; otherwise it would have been intolerable. Rom. viii. 20. "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same *in hope*."—The creature, as it were, groans by reason of this subjection to wicked men, although it be but for a while, ver. 22. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in vain together until now." Therefore surely it would be no way fit that

wicked men, who do no good, and bring forth no fruit to God, should live here always, to have the various creatures subservient to them, as they are now. The earth can scarcely bear wicked men during that short time for which they stay here. It is no way fit, therefore, that it should be forced to bear them always.

Men who bring forth no fruit to God are cumberers of the ground. Luke xiii. 7. And it is not meet that they should be suffered to cumber the ground *always*. God cannot be glorified in this way of disposing of unfruitful persons. If such men should be suffered to live always in such a state as this, it would be so far from being to the glory of God, that it would be to the disparagement of his *wisdom* to continue them in a state so unsuitable for them. It would also be a disparagement to his *justice;* for this is a world where "all things come alike to all, and there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked." If there were no other state but this for wicked men, justice could not possibly take place. It would also reflect upon the *holiness* of God. For ever to uphold this world for a habitation of such persons, and for ever to continue the communications of his bounty and goodness to them, would appear as though he were disposed to countenance and encourage wickedness.

2. If men do not bring forth fruit to God, they are not fit to be disposed of *in heaven*. Heaven, above all others, is the most improper place for them. Every thing appertaining to that state is unsuitable for them. The *company* is most unsuitable. The original inhabitants of that world are the angels. But what a disagreeable union would that be, to unite wicked men and angels in the same society? The *employments* of that world are unsuitable. The employments are serving and glorifying God. How unsuitable then would it be to plant barren trees in that heavenly paradise, trees that would bring forth no fruit, to the divine glory! The *enjoyments* of heaven are unsuitable. The enjoyments are holy and spiritual, the happiness of beholding the glory of God, and praising his name, and the like. But these enjoyments are as unsuitable as can be to the carnal earthly minds of wicked men. They would be no enjoyments to them; but on the contrary would be most disagreeable, and what they cannot relish, but entirely nauseate. The *design* of heaven is unsuitable to them. The design of God in making heaven was, that it might be a place of holy habitation, for the reward of the righteous, and not a habitation for the wicked. It would greatly reflect on the wisdom of God to dispose of wicked men there; for it would be the greatest confusion. But God is not the author of confusion. 1 Cor. xiv. 33. It would be contrary to the holiness of God to take wicked men so near to himself, into his glorious presence, to dwell for ever in the part of that creation which is, as it were, his own pa-

lace, and to sit at his table. We read in Psalm v. 4. "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. Therefore it would be impossible that the end of the existence of wicked men should be answered by placing them in heaven.

IV. Men who bring forth no fruit to God may yet in suffering destruction be useful. Although they be not useful by any thing they do; yet they may be useful in what they may suffer; just as a barren tree, which is no way useful standing in the vineyard, may be good fuel. God can find use for the most wicked men; he hath his use for vessels of wrath as well as for vessels of mercy: 2 Tim. ii. 20. "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold, and of silver, but also of wood, and of earth, and some to honour, and some to dishonour:" Prov. xvi. 4. "the Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." I shall briefly take notice of some ends which God accomplishes by it.

1. Unfruitful persons are of use in their destruction for the glory of God's *justice*. The vindictive justice of God is a glorious attribute, as well as his mercy; and the glory of this attribute appears in the everlasting destruction and ruin of the barren and unfruitful.—The glory of divine justice in the perdition of ungodly men, appears wonderful and glorious in the eyes of the saints and angels in heaven. Hence we have an account, that they sing praises to God, and extol his justice at the sight of the awful judgments which he inflicts on wicked men: Rev. xvi. 5, 6. "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus: for they have shed the blood of saints, and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy:" and Rev. xix. 1, 2. And after these things I heard a great voice, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand."

2. Unfruitful persons in their destruction are of use for God to glorify his *majesty* upon them. The awful majesty of God remarkably appears in those dreadful and amazing punishments which he inflicts on those who rise up against him. A sense of the majesty of an earthly prince is supported very much by a sense of its being a dreadful thing to affront him. God glorifies his own majesty in the destruction of wicked men; and herein he appears infinitely great, in that it appears to be an infinitely dreadful thing to offend him. How awful doth the majesty of God appear in the dreadfulness of his anger? This we may learn to be one end of the damnation of the wicked, from Rom. ix. 22. "What if God willing to show his wrath, and

to make his great power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" This is a part of his majesty and glory. God tells Pharaoh, that for this cause he raised him up, that he might show his power in him, and that his name might be declared through all the earth, in his destruction, Exod. ix. 15, 16; and again, chap. xiv. 17. "I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen."

3. The destruction of the unfruitful is of use, to give the saints a *greater sense* of their happiness, and of God's grace to them. The wicked will be destroyed and tormented in the view of the saints, and other inhabitants of heaven. This we are taught in Rev. xiv. 10. "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of his holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." And in Isa. lxvi. 24. "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." When the saints in heaven shall look upon the damned in hell, it will serve to give them a greater sense of their own happiness. When they shall see how dreadful the anger of God is, it will make them the more prize his love. They will rejoice the more, that they are not the objects of God's anger, but of his favour; that they are not the subjects of his dreadful wrath, but are treated as his children, to dwell in the everlasting embraces of his love. The misery of the damned, will give them a greater sense of the distinguishing grace and love of God to them, that he should from all eternity set his love on them, and make so great a difference between them and others who are of the same species, and have deserved no worse of God than they. What a great sense will this give them of the wonderful grace of God to them! and how will it heighten their praises! with how much greater admiration and exultation of soul, will they sing of the free and sovereign grace of God to them!

When they shall look upon the damned, and see their misery, how will heaven ring with the praises of God's justice towards the wicked, and his grace towards the saints! And with how much greater enlargement of heart will they praise Jesus Christ, their Redeemer, that ever he was pleased to set his love upon them, his dying love! and that he should so distinguish them as to shed his blood, and make his soul an offering to redeem them from that misery, and to bring them to such happiness! With what love and ecstacy will they sing that song in Rev. v. 9, 10. "Thou art worthy: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every tongue, and

kindred, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." One end, which the apostle mentions, why God appointed vessels of wrath, is the more to make known the wonderfulness of his mercy towards the saints. In Rom. ix. 22, 23, there are two ends mentioned: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" That is one end; another is mentioned immediately after:— "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory."

APPLICATION.

1. Hence we may learn, how just and righteous God is in the destruction of those who bring forth no fruit to him. Seeing there is no other way in which the end of their being can be obtained, certainly it is most just that God should thus dispose of them. Why should he be frustrated of his end through their perverseness? If men will not do the work for which he hath made and fitted them; if they, through a spirit of opposition and rebellion, refuse; why should God suffer himself to be disappointed of his end in making them? It doth not become his infinite greatness and majesty to suffer himself to be frustrated by the wickedness and perverseness of sinful worms of the dust. If God should suffer this, it would seem to argue either a want of wisdom, to fix upon a good end, or a want of power to accomplish it. God made all men that they might be useful; and, if they will not be useful in their conduct and actions, how just is it that God should make them useful in their sufferings! He made all men for his own glory; and if they, contrary to the revealed will of God, refuse to glorify him actively and willingly, how just is it that God should glorify himself upon them!

Men are under no natural necessity of being put to this use of glorifying God in their sufferings. God gives them opportunity of glorifying him in bringing forth fruit; puts them under advantages for it, and uses many means to bring them to it. But if they will not be useful this way, it is very just that God should make them useful in the only remaining way in which they can be useful, *viz.* in their destruction. God is not forward to put them to this use. He tells us, that he hath "no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live;" Ezek. xxxiii. 11. He represents the destruction of sinners as a work to which he is backward; yet it is meet that they should be destroyed, rather than that they should be suffered to frustrate the end of their being. Who can blame the husbandman for cutting down and burning a barren tree, after he hath digged about it, and dunged it, and

used all proper means to make it fruitful? Let those among us consider this, who have lived all their lives, hitherto, unprofitably, and never have brought forth any fruit to God's glory, notwithstanding all the means that have been used with them.—Consider how just it would be if God should utterly destroy you, and glorify himself upon you in that way; and what a wonderful patience it is, that God hath not done it before now.

II. This subject ought to put you upon examining yourselves, whether you be not wholly useless creatures. You have now heard, that those who bring forth no fruit to God, are, as to any good they do, wholly useless. Inquire, therefore, whether you have ever done any thing from a gracious respect to God, or out of love to him? Seeking only your worldly interest, or for you to come to public worship on the Sabbath, to pray in your families, and other such things, merely in compliance with the general custom—or that you be sober, moral, and religious, only to be seen of men, or out of respect to your own credit, and honour—is not bringing forth fruit to God. How is that for God which is only for the sake of custom, the esteem of men, or merely from the fear of hell? What thanks are due to you for not loving your own misery, and for being willing to take some pains to escape burning in hell to all eternity? There is not a devil in hell, but would do the same: Hos. x. 1. "Israel is an *empty* vine; he bringeth forth fruit *unto himself*."

There is no fruit brought forth to God, where there is nothing done from love, or true respect to him. God looketh at the heart. He doth not stand in need of our services, neither is he benefitted by any thing that we can do. He doth not receive any thing of us, but only as a suitable testimony of our love and respect to him. This is the fruit that he seeks. Men themselves will not accept of those shows of friendship, which they think are hypocritical, and come not from the heart. How much less should God, who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men! John iv. 24. "God is a spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." Inquire, therefore, whether you ever did the least thing out of love to God? Have you not done all for yourselves? Zech. viii. 5, 6. "When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?"

III. Another use of this subject may be of *conviction* and *humiliation*, to those who never have brought forth any fruit to God. If, upon examination, you find that you have never, in

all your lives, done any thing out of a true respect to God, then it hath been demonstrated, that, as to any thing which you do, you are altogether useless creatures. And consider what a shameful thing it is for such rational beings as you are, and placed under such advantages, for usefulness, yet to be wholly useless, and to live in the world to no purpose! We esteem it a very mean character in any person, that he is worthless and insignificant; and, to be called so, is taken as a great reproach. But consider, seriously, whether you can clear yourselves of this character. Set reason to work; can you rationally suppose, that you do, in any measure, answer the end for which God gave you your being, and made you of a nature superior to the beasts?—But that you may be sensible what cause you have to be ashamed of your unprofitableness, consider the following things:

1. How much God hath *bestowed* upon you, in the endowments of your nature. God hath made you rational, intelligent creatures; hath endued you with noble powers—those endowments wherein the natural image of God consists. You are vastly exalted in your nature above other kinds of creatures here below. You are capable of a thousand times as much as any of the brute-creatures. He hath given you a power of understanding, which is capable of extending itself, of looking back to the beginning of time, and of considering what was before the world, and of looking forward beyond the end of time. It is capable of extending beyond the utmost limits of the universe; and is a faculty whereby you are akin to angels, and are capable even of knowing and contemplating the divine Being, and his glorious perfections, manifested in his works and in his word. You have souls capable of being the habitation of the Holy Spirit of God, and his divine grace. You are capable of the noble employments of angels. How lamentable and shameful is it, that such a creature should be altogether useless, and live in vain! How lamentable, that such a noble and excellent piece of divine workmanship should fail of its end, and be to no purpose! Was it ever worth while for God to make you such a creature, with such a noble nature, and so much above other kinds of creatures, only to eat, and drink, and gratify your sensual appetites? How lamentable and shameful to you, that such a noble tree should be more useless than any tree of the forest; that man, whom God hath thus set in honour, should make himself more worthless than the beasts that perish!

2. How much God hath *done for you* in the *creation* of the world. He made the earth, and seas, and all their fulness, for the use of man, Psalm cxv. 16. "The earth hath he given to the children of men." He made the vast variety of creatures for man's use and service: Gen. i. 28. "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over

every living thing that moveth upon the earth." For the same purpose he made all the plants, and herbs, and trees of the field: Gen. i. 29. "I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." He made the sun in the heavens, that glorious luminary, that wonderful globe of light, to give light to man, and to constitute the difference between day and night. He also made the moon, and the vast multitude of stars to be to him *signs and seasons*. What great provision hath God made for man! What a vast variety of good things for food and convenience, to put him under advantages to be useful! How lamentable is it, then, that after all these things he should be an useless creature!

3. How much is done for you in the course of God's *common providence!* Consider how nature is continually labouring for you. The sun is, as it were, in a ferment for mankind, and spending his rays upon man to put him under advantage to be useful. The winds and clouds are continually labouring for you, and the waters are going in a constant circulation, ascending in the air from the seas, descending in rain, gathering in streams and rivers, returning to the sea, and again ascending and descending, for you. The earth is continually labouring to bring forth her fruit for your support. The trees of the field, and many of the poor brute-creatures, are continually labouring and spending their strength for you! How much of the fulness of the earth is spent upon you! How many of God's creatures are devoured by you! How many of the lives of the living creatures of God are destroyed for your sake, for your support and comfort!—Now, how lamentable will it be if, after all, you be altogether useless, and live to no purpose! What mere cumberers of the ground will you be! Luke xiii. 7. Nature, which thus continually labours for you, will be burdened with you. This seems to be what the apostle means, Rom. viii. 20—22. where he tells us, that the creation is made subject to vanity, and brought into the bondage of corruption; and that the whole creation groans and travails in pain, under this bondage.

4. How much is done for you in the use of the *means* of *grace*. How much hath God done to provide you with suitable means and advantages for usefulness! How many prophets hath he sent into the world in different ages, inspiring them with his Holy Spirit, and enabling them to work many miracles to confirm their word, whereby you now have his written word to instruct you! How great a thing hath God done for you, to give you opportunity and advantage to be useful, in that he hath sent his own Son into the world! He who is really and truly God, united himself to the human nature, and became

man to be a prophet and teacher to you and other sinners. Yea, he laid down his life to make atonement for sin, that you might have encouragement to serve God with hopes of acceptance.—How many ordinances have been instituted for you! How much of the labour of the ministers of God hath been spent upon you! Is not that true concerning you which is said (Isa. v.) of the vineyard planted in a very fruitful hill, and fenced and cultivated with peculiar care and pains, which yet proved unfruitful? How much hath the dresser of the vineyard digged about the barren tree, and dunged it, and yet it remains barren!

5. Consider what a shame it is that you should live in vain, when all the *other creatures*, inferior to you, glorify their Creator, according to their nature. You who are so highly exalted in the world, are more useless than the brute creation; yea, than the meanest worms, or things without life, as earth and stones: For they all answer their end; none of them fail of it. They are all useful in their places, all render their proper tribute of praise to their Creator: while you are mere nuisances in the creation, and burdens to the earth: as any tree of the forest is more useful than the vine, if it bear not fruit.

IV. Let me, in a farther application of this doctrine, *exhort* you by all means to bring forth fruit to God. Let it be your constant endeavour to be in this way actively useful in the world.——Here consider three things.

1. What an *honour* it will be to such poor creatures as you are to bring forth fruit to the divine glory. What is such a poor worm as man, that he should be enabled to bring forth any fruit to God! It is the greatest honour of his nature, that God hath given him a capacity of glorifying the great Creator. There is no creature in the visible world that is capable of actively glorifying God, but man.

2. In bringing forth fruit to God, you will be so *profitable* to none as to *yourselves*. You cannot thereby be profitable to God; Job xxii. 2. "Can a man be profitable to God?" And though thereby you may be profitable to your fellow-creatures; yet the fruit which you bring forth to God will be a greater benefit to yourselves than to any one living.—Although you are under a natural obligation to bring forth fruit to God, yet he will richly reward you for it. In requiring you to bring forth fruit to him, he doth but require you to bring forth fruit to your own happiness. You will taste the sweetness of your own fruit. It will be most profitable for you in this world, and the pleasure will be beyond the labour. Beside this, God hath promised to such a life, everlasting rewards, unspeakable, infinite benefits. So that by it you will infinitely advance your own interest.

3. If you remain thus unprofitable, and be not actively useful, surely God will obtain his end of you, in your *destruction*. He will say concerning the barren tree, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Christ (John xv. 6.) tells us, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." This is spoken of the barren branches in the vine. How would you yourselves do in such a case with a barren tree in an orchard, or with weeds and tares in your fields? Doubtless if it were in your power, you would utterly destroy them.—God will have his end; he will not be frustrated. Though all men and devils unite their endeavours, they cannot frustrate God in any thing; and "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished;" Prov. xi. 21. God hath sworn by his great name, that he will have his glory of men, whether they will actively glorify him or no. Numb. xiv. 21, 22, 23. "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it."—"The axe lieth at the root of the trees; and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire;" Matt. iii. 10. The end of those men who bring forth nothing but briers and thorns, is to be burned, as in Heb. vi. 7, 8. "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." So we read of the tares, Matt. xiii. 30. "Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them;" and in verses 40, 41, 42. "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be at the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."—So it is said of the chaff, Matt. iii. 12. "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner: but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

If you continue not to bring forth any fruit to the divine glory, hell will be the only fit place for you. It is a place prepared on purpose to be a receptacle of such persons. In hell nature ceases to labour any more for sinners. There they will have no opportunity to consume the fruits of divine goodness

on their lusts; there they can prejudice or incumber nothing, upon which God sets any value. There no faithful servants and ministers of God will any longer spend their strength in vain upon them. When the barren tree is in the fire the servants of the husbandman are freed from any further labour about it.—In hell the fruitless will no more have opportunity to clog and discourage the flourishing of religion, and to destroy much good, as they often do in this world; they will no more have opportunity to corrupt others by their ill example; they will no more have it in their power to offend the godly; they may hurt and torment one another; but the godly will be out of their reach. In hell there will be no ordinances, no sabbaths, no sacraments, no sacred things, for them to profane and defile by their careless and hypocritical attendance; but unceasing wo for their abuse.

SERMON XI.*

SINNERS IN ZION TENDERLY WARNED; OR THE FEARFULNESS WHICH WILL HEREAFTER SURPRISE SINNERS IN ZION, REPRESENTED AND IMPROVED.

ISAIAH xxxiii. 14.

The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

SECT. I.

Showing who are sinners in Zion.

THERE are two kinds of persons among God's professing people; the one, those who are truly godly, spoken of in the verse following the text; *He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly, &c.* The other kind consists of sinners in Zion, or hypocrites. It is to be observed, that the prophet in this chapter speaks interchangeably, first to the one, and then to the other of these characters of men; awfully threatening and denouncing the wrath of God against the one, and comforting the other with gracious promises. Thus you may observe, in the 5th and 6th verses, there are comfortable promises to the godly; then in the eight following verses, awful judgments are threatened against the sinners in Zion. Again, in the two next verses are blessed promises to the sincerely godly, and in the former part of ver. 17. And then in the latter part of ver. 17. and in ver. 18, and 19. are terrible threatenings to sinners in Zion: then in the verses that follow are gracious promises to the godly.

Our text is part of what is said in this chapter to sinners in Zion. In ver. 10. it is said, *Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted, now will I lift up myself*, i. e. Now will I

* The substance of two posthumous discourses, dated Dec. 1740.

arise to execute wrath upon the ungodly: I will not let them alone any longer. They shall see that I am not asleep, and that I am not regardless of mine own honour. *Now will I be exalted.* Though they have cast contempt upon me, yet I will vindicate the honour of my own majesty: I will exalt myself, and show my greatness, and my awful majesty in their destruction. *Now will I lift up myself;* now I will no longer have mine honour trampled in the dust by them: But my glory shall be manifested in their misery.

In ver. 11. the prophet proceeds, *Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble:* i. e. Ye shall pursue happiness in ways of wickedness, but you shall not obtain it; you are as ground which brings forth no fruit, as if only chaff were sowed in it; it brings forth nothing but stubble, which is fit for nothing but to be burned.

It seems to have been the manner in that land where the corn grew very rank, when they had reaped the wheat, and gathered it off from the ground, to set fire to the stubble; which is alluded to here; and therefore it is added, *Your breath as fire, shall devour you:* i. e. Your own wicked speeches, your wickedness that you commit with your breath or with your tongues, shall set fire to the stubble and devour it.

Then it follows in ver. 12. *And the people shall be as the burnings of lime.* As they are wont to burn lime in a great and exceeding fierce fire, till stones, and bones, and other things are burnt to lime; so shall the wicked be burnt in the fire of God's wrath. *As thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the fire:* as briers and thorns are the incumbrance and curse of the ground where they grow, and are wont to be burnt; so shall it be with the wicked that are among God's people, and grow in God's field. Heb. vi. 7, 8. "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."

Then it follows in ver. 13. *Hear ye that are far off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might.* This implies that God will, by the destruction of ungodly men, manifest his glory very publicly, even in the sight of the whole world, both in the sight of those that are near, and of those that are far off. *Acknowledge my might.* Which implies that God will execute wrath upon ungodly men, in such a manner as extraordinarily to show forth his great and mighty power. The destruction and misery of the wicked will be so dreadful, that it will be a manifestation of the omnipotent power of God, that he can execute such misery; agreeably to Rom. ix. 22. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known.

endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.

Next follow these words: *The sinners in Zion are afraid! fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* The sense is, that the time will come, when fearfulness will surprise the sinners in Zion; because they will know, that they are about to be cast into a devouring fire, which they must suffer for ever and ever, and which none can endure.

It may be inquired, who are the sinners in Zion?—I answer, That they are those who are in a natural condition among the visible people of God. Zion, or the city of David of old, was a type of the church; and the church of God in scripture is perhaps more frequently called by the name of Zion than by any other name. And commonly by Zion is meant the true church of Christ, or the invisible church of true saints. But sometimes by this name is meant the visible church, consisting of those who are outwardly, by profession and external privileges, the people of God. This is intended by Zion in this text.

The greater part of the world are sinners. Christ's flock is, and ever hath been but a little flock. And the sinners of the *world* are of two sorts: those who are visibly of Satan's kingdom, who are without the pale of the visible church; and those who do not profess the true religion, nor attend the external ordinances of it. Besides these there are the sinners in *Zion*. Both are the objects of the displeasure and wrath of God; but his wrath is more especially manifested in scripture against the latter. Sinners in Zion will have by far the lowest place in hell. They are exalted nearest to heaven in this world, and they will be lowest in hell in another. The same is meant by *hypocrites*. Sinners in Zion are all hypocrites; for they make a profession of the true religion; they attend God's ordinances, and make a show of being the worshippers of God; but all is hypocrisy.

SECT. II.

How fearfulness will hereafter surprise sinners in Zion.

1. They will hereafter be *afraid*. Now many of them seem to have little or no fear. They are quiet and secure. Nothing will awaken them: the most awful threatenings and the loudest warnings do not much move them. They are not so much moved with them, but that they can eat, and drink, and sleep, and go about their worldly concerns without much dis-

turbance. But the time will come, when the hardest and most stupid wretches will be awakened. Though now preaching will not awaken them, and the death of others will not make them afraid; though seeing others awakened and converted will not much affect them; though they can stand all that is to be heard and seen in a time of general out-pouring of the Spirit of God, without being much moved; yet the time will come, when they will be awakened, and fear will take hold of them. They will be afraid of the wrath of God: however senseless they be now, they will hereafter be sensible of the awful greatness of God, and that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands.

2. They will be *surprised* with fear. This seems to imply two things; viz. the greatness of their fear, and the suddenness of it.

(1.) The *greatness* of their fear. Surprise argues a high degree of fear. Their fears will be to the degree of astonishment. Some of the sinners in Zion are somewhat afraid now: they now and then have some degree of fear. They are not indeed *convinced* that there is such a place as hell; but they are *afraid* there is. They are not thoroughly awakened; neither are they quite easy. They have at certain times inward molestations from their consciences; but they have no such degrees of fear, as to put them upon any thorough endeavours to escape future wrath.

However, hereafter they will have fear enough, as much, and a great deal more, than they will be able to stand under. Their fear will be to the degree of horror; they will be horribly afraid; and terrors will take hold on them as waters. Thus we read of *their fear coming as a desolation, and of distress and anguish coming upon them;* Prov. i. 27. It is also very emphatically said of the wicked, that *trouble and anguish shall prevail against him, as a King ready to the battle.* Job xv. 24.

The stoutest heart of them all will then melt with fear. The hearts of those who are of a sturdy spirit, and, perhaps, scorn to own themselves afraid of any man, and are even ashamed to own themselves afraid of the wrath of God, will then become as weak as water, as weak as the heart of a little child. And the most reserved of them will not be able to hide his fears. Their faces will turn pale; they will appear with amazement in their countenances; every joint in them will tremble; all their bones will shake; and their knees will smite one against another: nor will they be able to refrain from crying out with fear, and from rending the air with the most dismal shrieks.

(2.) They will be *suddenly* seized with fear. The sinners in Zion often remain secure, till they are surprised, as with a cry at midnight. They will be, as it were, awakened out of their secure sleep in a dismal fright. They will see an unex-

pected calamity coming upon them; far more dreadful than they were aware of, and coming at an unexpected season.

With respect to the TIME, when the wicked shall be thus surprised with fear;

1. It is often so on a *death-bed*. Many things pass in their life-time, which, one would think, might well strike terror into their souls; as when they see others die, who are as young as they, and of like condition and circumstances with themselves, whereby they may see how uncertain their lives are, and how unsafe their souls. It may well surprise many sinners, to consider how old they are grown, and are yet in a Christless state; how much of their opportunity to get an interest in Christ is irrecoverably gone, and how little remains; also, how much greater their disadvantages now are, than they have been. But these things do not terrify them: as age increases, so do the hardness and stupidity of their hearts grow upon them.

But when death comes, then the sinner is often filled with astonishment. It may be, when he is first taken sick, he has great hope that he shall recover; as men are ready to flatter themselves with hopes, that things will be as they fain would have them. But when the distemper comes to prevail much upon him, and he sees that he is going into eternity; when he sees that all the medicines of physicians are in vain, that all the care and endeavours of friends are to no purpose, that nothing seems to help him, that his strength is gone, that his friends weep over him, and look upon his case as desperate; when he sees, by the countenance and behaviour of the physician, that he looks upon his case as past hope, and, perhaps, overhears a whispering in the room, wherein his friends signify one to another, that they look upon it that he is struck with death, or wherein they tell one another, that his extreme parts grow cold, that his countenance and manner of breathing, and his pulse, show death, and that he begins to be in a cold death-sweat; and when, perhaps, by and by, some one thinks himself bound in duty and faithfulness to let him know the worst, and, therefore, comes and asks him whether or no he be sensible that he is a dying:—then how doth fearfulness surprise the sinner in Zion. How doth his heart melt with fear! This is the thing which he feared ever since he was taken sick; but till now, he had hope that he should recover. The physician did not speak; or, if he despaired, he spoke of such and such medicines as being very proper: and he hoped that they would be effectual; and when these failed, he changed his medicines, and applied something new: then the sinner hoped *that* would be effectual. Thus, although he constantly grew worse and worse, still he hoped to recover.

At the same time, he cried to God to spare him, and made promises how he would live, if God would spare him; and he

hoped that God would hear him. He observed, also, that his friends, and perhaps the minister, seemed to pray earnestly for him; and he could not but hope, that those prayers would be answered, and he should be restored. But now how doth his heart sink and die within him! how doth he look about with a frighted countenance! how quick is the motion of his eye, through inward fear! and how quick and sudden are all his motions! what a frightful hurry doth he seem to be in! How doth every thing look to him, when he sees pale grim death staring him in the face, and a vast eternity within a few hours or minutes of him!

It may be, he still struggles for a little hope; he is loth to believe what is told him; he tells his informers, that he hopes they are more affrighted than they need be; he hopes that those symptoms arise from some other cause; and, like a poor drowning man, he catches at slender and brittle twigs, and clinches his hands about whatever he sees within his reach.

But as death creeps more and more on him, he sees his twigs break, all his hopes of life fail, and he sees he must die. O! there is nothing but death before him! He hath been hoping; but his hopes are all dashed; he sees this world, and all that belongs to it, are gone. Now come the thoughts of hell into his mind with amazement. O! how shall he go out of the world? He knows he hath no interest in Christ; his sins stare him in the face. O the dreadful gulf of eternity! He had been crying to God, perhaps since he was sick, to save him; and he had some hope, if it were his last sickness, that yet God would pity him, and give him pardoning grace before he should die. He begged and pleaded, and he hoped that God would have pity on his poor soul. At the same time, he asked others to pray for him, and he had been looking day after day for some light to shine into his soul. But, alas! now he is a dying, and his friends ask him, how death appears to him? whether any light appear? whether God have not given him some token of his favour? and he answers, no, with a poor, faltering, trembling voice, if able to speak at all: Or, if his friends ask a signal of hope, he can give none.

Now death comes on him more and more, and he just on the brink of eternity. Who can express the fear, the misgivings, the hangings back, and the horrible fright and amazement, of his soul? Some who, in such circumstances, have been able to speak, have been known to cry out, *O! eternity! eternity!* and some, *O a thousand worlds for an inch of time! O! if they might but live a little while longer!* But it must not be; go they must. They feel the frame of nature dissolving, and perceive the soul is just a-going; for sometimes the exercise of reason seems to hold to the last.

What, in such a case, is felt in the soul, in those last moments, when it is just breaking its bands with the body, about to fetch its leap, on the edge of eternity, and the very brink of hell, without any Saviour, or the least testimony of divine mercy: I say, what is sometimes felt by Christless souls, in these moments, none can tell; nor is it within the compass of our conception.

2. The misery of the departed soul of a sinner, besides what it now feels, consists in a great part in amazing fears of what is *yet to come*. When the union of the soul and body is actually broken, and the body has fetched its last gasp, the soul forsakes its old habitation, and then falls into the hands of devils, who fly upon it, and seize it more violently than ever hungry lions flew upon their prey. And with what horror will it fall into those cruel hands!

If we imagine to ourselves the dreadful fear with which a lamb or kid falls into the paws of a wolf, which lays hold of it with open mouth; or, if we imagine to ourselves the feeling of a little child, that hath been pursued by a lion, when it is taken hold of, and sees the terrible creature open his devouring jaws, to tear it in pieces; or the feeling of those two and forty children, who had mocked Elisha, when they fell into the paws of the bears that tare them in pieces: I say, if we could have a perfect idea of that terror and astonishment which a little child has in such a case, yet we should have but a faint idea of what is felt in the departing soul of a sinner, when it falls into the hands of those cruel devils, those roaring lions, which then seize of it.

And when the soul is carried to hell, and there is tormented, suffers the wrath of the Almighty, and is overwhelmed and crushed with it, it will also be amazed with the apprehensions of what shall *yet remain*. To think of an eternity of this torment remaining, O how will it fill, and overbear, and sink down the wretched soul! How will the thought of the duration of this torment, without end, cause the heart to melt like wax! How will the thought of it sink the soul into the bottomless pit of darkness and gloominess! Even those proud and sturdy spirits, the devils, tremble at the thoughts of that *greater* torment which they are to suffer at the day of judgment. So will the poor damned souls of men. They have already more than they will be able to bear: how then will they tremble at the thought of having their misery so vastly augmented!

Persons, sometimes, in this world, are afraid of the day of judgment. If there be an earthquake, or if there be more than common thunder and lightning, or if there be some unusual sight in the heavens, their hearts are ready to tremble for fear that the day of judgment is at hand. O how then do the poor souls in hell fear it, who know so much more about it, who

know by what they feel already, and know *certainly*, that whenever it comes, they shall stand on the left hand of the judge, to receive the dreadful sentence; and that then, in soul and body, they must enter into those everlasting burnings which are prepared for the devil and his angels, and who probably know that their misery is to be an hundred fold greater than it is now.

3. Fearfulness will surprise them at the *last judgment*. When Christ shall appear in the clouds of heaven, and the last trumpet shall sound, then will the hearts of wicked men be surprised with fearfulness. The poor damned soul, in expectation of it, trembles every day and every hour, from the time of its departure from the body. It knows not, indeed, *when* it is to be, but it knows it *is* to be. But when the alarm is given in hell that the day is come, it will be a dreadful alarm indeed. It will, as it were, fill the caverns of hell with shrieks; and when the souls of the damned shall enter into their bodies, it will be with amazing horror of what is coming. And when they shall lift up their heads out of their graves, and shall see the judge; it will be a most terrible sight. Gladly would they return into their graves again, and hide themselves there, if that might be; and gladly would they return into hell, their former state of misery, to hide themselves from this awful sight, if that would excuse them.

So those sinners in Zion, who shall then be found alive on the earth, when they shall see this sight will be surprised with fearfulness. The fear and horror which many poor sinners feel when they are dying, is great, and beyond all that of which we can have any idea; but that is nothing to the horror that will seize them when they shall come to see this sight.

There will not be a wicked man upon earth who will be able to bear it, let him be who he will; let him be rich or poor old or young, male or female, servant or master, king or subject, learned or unlearned; let him be ever so proud, ever so courageous, and ever so sturdy. There is not one who will be able at all to support himself; when he shall see this sight, it will immediately sink his spirit; it will loose the joints of his loins; it will make his countenance more ghastly than death. The rich captains and valiant generals and princes, who now scorn to show any fear at the face of an enemy, who scorn to tremble at the roaring of cannon, will tremble and shriek when they shall hear the last trumpet, and see the majesty of their judge: it will make their teeth to chatter, and make them fly to hide themselves in the caves and rocks of mountains, crying to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and cover them from the wrath of the judge.

Fearfulness will surprise them when they shall be dragged before the judgment-seat. The wicked hang back when they are about to meet death; but in no measure as they will hang

back when they come to meet their great Judge. And when they come to stand before the Judge, and are put on his left hand, fearfulness and amazement will surprise them. The majesty of the Judge will be intolerable to them. His pure and holy eye, which will behold and search them, and pierce them through, will be more terrible to their souls a thousand times than flashes of lightning piercing their hearts. There will they stand in a trembling expectation, that by and by they shall hear the words of that dreadful sentence proceed out of the mouth of Christ: they will have an horrible expectation of that sentence; and what shall they do, whither shall they fly, so as to be out of its hearing? They cannot shut their ears, so as not to hear it.

Fearfulness will surprise them when the sentence shall come to be pronounced. At the close of the judgment, that dreadful doom will be uttered by the Judge; and it will be the most terrible voice that ever was heard. The sound of the last trumpet, that shall call men to judgment, will be a more terrible sound to wicked men than ever they shall have heard till that time; but the sound of the last sentence will be much more terrible than that. There will not be one of all those millions at the left hand, whether high or low, king or subject who will be able to support himself at all under the sound of that sentence; but they will all sink under it.

Lastly, Fearfulness will surprise them, when they shall come to see the fire kindle upon the world, in which they are to be tormented for ever. When the sentence shall have been pronounced, Christ, with his blessed saints and glorious angels, will leave this lower world, and ascend into heaven. Then will the flames begin to kindle, and fire will probably be seen coming down from heaven; and soon will the fire lay hold of that accursed multitude. Then will their hearts be surprised with fearfulness; that fire will appear a dreadful fire indeed. O what chatterings of teeth, what shaking of loins, what distortions of body, will there be at that time, when they shall see, and begin to feel, the fierceness of the flames! What shall they do, whither shall they go, to avoid those flames? Where shall they hide themselves? If they creep into holes, or creep into caves of the earth, yea if they could creep down to the centre of the earth, it will be in vain; for it will set on fire the bottoms of the mountains, and burn to the lowest hell. They will see no place to fly to, no place to hide themselves.

Then their hearts will be filled with fearfulness, and will utterly sink in despair. Thus it shall hereafter be with every one that shall then be found to be a sinner, and especially with sinners in Zion.

SECT. III.

Why sinners in general will hereafter be surprised with fear.

1. Fearfulness will surprise them, because they will know that they are to be cast into *devouring fire*. There is nothing which seems to give one a more terrible idea of torment and misery, than to think of being cast alive into a great fire; especially if we conceive of the senses remaining quick, and not benumbed by the fire. The wicked will hereafter have that to make them afraid, that they are not only to be cast into a *fire* but into *devouring* fire; which implies, that it will be a fire of extraordinary fierceness of heat, and before which nothing can stand.

The fire into which men are to be cast is called a *furnace of fire*. Furnaces are contrived for an extreme degree of heat, this being necessary for the purposes for which they are designed, as the running and refining of metals, and the melting of materials into glass. The fire of such earthly furnaces may be called *devouring fire*, as the heat of some of them is such, that in them even stones will presently be dissolved. Now, if a person should be brought to the mouth of such a furnace and there should see how the fire glows, so as presently to make every thing cast into it all over white, and bright with fire, and at the same time should know that he was immediately to be cast into this furnace, would not fearfulness surprise him?

In some heathen countries, the manner of disposing of dead bodies is to dig a great pit, to put in it a great quantity of fuel, to put the dead bodies on the pile, and to set it on fire. This is some image of the burning of dead souls in the pit of hell. Now, if a person were brought to the edge of such a pit, all filled with glowing flames, to be immediately cast into it, would it not surprise the heart with fearfulness?

The flames of a very great fire, as when a house is all on fire, give one some idea of the fierceness of the wrath of God: such is the rage of the flames. And we see that the greater a fire is, the fiercer is its heat in every part; and the reason is, because one part heats another. The heat in a particular place, besides the heat which proceeds out of the fuel in that place, is increased by the additional heat of the fire all around it. Hence we may conceive something of what fierceness that fire will be, when this visible world shall be turned into one great furnace. That will be devouring fire indeed. Such will be the heat of it, that, as the apostle says, *the elements shall melt with fervent heat*. 2 Pet. iii. 10.

Men can artificially raise such a degree of heat with burning glasses, as will quickly melt the very stones and sand. And it is probable that the heat of that great fire which will burn the world will be such as to melt the rocks, and the very ground, and turn them into a kind of liquid fire: so that the whole world will probably be converted into a great lake, or liquid globe of fire, a vast ocean of fire, in which the wicked shall be overwhelmed. It will be an ocean of fire, which will always be in a tempest, in which the wicked shall be tossed to and fro, having no rest day nor night, vast waves or billows of fire continually rolling over their heads.

But all this will be only an *image* of that dreadful fire of the wrath of God, which the wicked shall at the same time suffer in their *souls*. We read in Rev. xix. 15. of *the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God*. This is an extraordinary expression, carrying a terrible idea of the future misery of the wicked. If it had been only said the wrath of God, that would have expressed what is dreadful. If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion, what is the wrath of God? But it is not only said the wrath of God, but *the fierceness and wrath of God*, or the rage of his wrath; and not only so, but the fierceness and wrath of *Almighty* God. O what is that! the fierceness and rage or fury of Omnipotence! of a being of infinite strength! What an idea doth that give of the state of those worms that suffer the fierceness and wrath of such an Almighty Being! And is it any wonder that fearfulness surprises their hearts, when they see this about to be executed upon them?

2. Another reason given in the text, why fearfulness will hereafter surprise sinners, is, that they will be sensible this devouring fire will be *everlasting*. If a man were brought to the mouth of a great furnace to be cast into the midst of it, if at the same time he knew he should suffer torment but for *one minute*, yet that minute would be so terrible to him, that fearfulness would surprise and astonish him. How much more, if he were to be cast into a fire much fiercer; the fire in which wicked men are hereafter to be tormented! And if the thought of suffering this devouring fire for one minute would be enough to fill one with such surprising fearfulness, what will seize them, when they shall know that they are to bear it, not for one minute, nor for one day, nor for one year, nor for one age, nor for a hundred ages, nor for a million of ages, one after another, but *for ever and ever;* without any end, and never, never be delivered!

They shall know, that the fire itself will be *everlasting fire;* fire that never shall be quenched: Mark ix. 43, 44. *To go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* And they shall know that their torment in that fire never will have an end.

Rev. xiv. 10, 11. They shall know that they shall for ever be full of quick sense within and without; their heads, their eyes, their tongues, their hands, their feet, their loins, and their vitals, shall for ever be full of glowing melting fire, fierce enough to melt the very rocks and elements; and also that they shall eternally be full of the most quick and lively sense to feel the torment.

They shall know that they shall never cease restlessly to plunge and roll in that mighty ocean of fire. They shall know that those billows of fire, which are greater than the greatest mountains, will never cease to roll over them, following one another *for ever and ever.*

At the same time they will have a more lively sense of eternity than we ever can have here. We can have but a little sense of what an eternal duration is; and indeed none can comprehend it; it swallows up all thought and imagination: if we set ourselves to think upon it, we are presently lost. But they will have another and far clearer sense of it than we have. O how vast will eternity appear to them, when they think of spending it in such burnings? This is another reason that fearfulness will surprise them. The thoughts of eternity will always amaze them, and will sink and depress them to a bottomless depth of despair.

3. The third reason given in the text, why fearfulness will surprise them at the apprehension of this punishment, is, that that they will know, they shall *not be able to bear it.* When they shall see themselves going into that devouring fire, they will know that they are not able to bear it. They will know that they are not able to grapple with the fierceness and rage of those flames; for they will see the fierceness of the wrath of God in them; they will see an awful manifestation of Omnipotence in the fury of that glowing furnace. And in those views their hearts will utterly fail them; their hands will not be strong nor can their hearts endure. They will see that their strength is weakness; and that they can do nothing in such a conflict.

When they shall have come to the edge of the pit, and of the burning lake, and shall look into the furnace, then they will cry out with exclamations like these: O! what shall I do? how shall I bear the torments of this fire? how can I endure them? Who can endure? where is the man so stout-hearted, where is the giant of such strength and such courage, that he can bear this? O! what shall I do? Must I be cast in thither? I cannot bear it; I can never endure it. O that I could return to my first nothing! How can I endure it one moment? how much less can I endure it for ever and ever? And must I bear it for ever? what! for ever and ever, without any end, and never find any refuge, never be suffered to return to my

first nothing, and be no nearer to the end of these sufferings after millions of ages? O what dismal contentions and shrieks, and shaking of loins, and gnashing of teeth, will there be then! No wonder that fearfulness will then surprise the wicked.

SECT. IV.

Why it will be especially thus with sinners in Zion, who dwell among God's visible people.

There will hereafter be a very great difference between *sinners in Zion* and other sinners; a great difference between the most pointed hypocrite of them all, and the drunkards, the adulterers, the Sodomites, the thieves, and murderers among the heathen, who sin against only the light of nature. The fearfulness which will surprise them, although it will be very dreadful, yet will be in no measure so amazing and horrible, as that which will seize the sinners in Zion. That fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, which they will suffer, will be mild and moderate in comparison with that which the sinners in Zion will suffer.

The wrath of God is in his word manifested against the wicked Heathens; but it is ten times as much manifested against those sinners who make the profession and enjoy the privileges of the people of God; and yet remain enemies to God. Both the Old Testament and the New are full of terrible denunciations against such. Read the books of Moses, read the prophets, and you will find them full of dreadful threatenings against such. Read over the history of Christ's life and the speeches which he made when upon earth; there you will see what woes and curses he frequently denounced against such. How often did he say, that it should be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for the cities in which most of his mighty works were done! Read over the history of the Acts of the Apostles, and their Epistles; there you will find the same. It is the sinners in Zion or hypocrites, that are always in scripture spoken of as the people of God's wrath: Isa. x. 6. *I will send him against an hypocritical nation, against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil.*—The reasons are chiefly these;

1. That they sin against so much *greater light*. This is often spoken of in scripture, as an aggravation to the sin and wickedness of sinners in Zion. He that knows not his Lord's will, and doeth it not, is declared not to be worthy of so many stripes, as he who, being informed of his Lord's will, is in like manner disobedient. If men be blind, they have comparatively no sin: but when they see, when they have light to know their

duty, and to know their obligation, then their sin is great, John ix. 14. When the light that is in a man is darkness, how great is that darkness! and when men live in wickedness, in the midst of great light, that light is like to be the blackness of darkness indeed.

2. That they sin against such *professions and vows.* The Heathens never pretended to be the worshippers of the true God. They never pretended to be Christ's disciples; they never came under any covenant-obligations to be such. But this is not the case with sinners in Zion. Now, God highly resents falsehood and treachery. Judas, who betrayed Christ with a kiss, was a greater sinner, and much more the object of God's wrath, than Pilate who condemned him to be crucified, and was his murderer.

3. That they sin against so much greater mercy. They have the infinite mercy of God, in giving his own Son, often set before them: they have the dying love of Christ represented to them: they have this mercy, this glorious Saviour, his blood and righteousness, often offered to them: they have a blessed opportunity to obtain salvation for their souls; a great price is put into their hands to this end: they have that precious treasure, the holy scriptures, and enjoy Sabbaths, and sacraments, and the various means of grace: but all these means and advantages, these opportunities, offers, mercies, and invitations, they abuse, despise, and reject.

But there is no wrath like that which arises from mercy abused and rejected. When mercy is in this way turned into wrath, this is the fiercest wrath.—Sinners in Zion, beside their fall by the first Adam, have a fall also by the second: he is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, at which they stumble and fall; and there is no fall like this; the fall by the first Adam is light in comparison with it.

On these accounts, whenever we see the day of judgment, as every one of us shall see it, we shall easily distinguish between the sinners in Zion and other sinners, by their shriller cries, their louder, more bitter, and dolorous shrieks, the greater amazement of their countenances, and the more dismal shaking of their limbs, and contortions of their bodies.

SECT. V.

An earnest Exhortation to sinners in Zion, now to fly from the devouring fire and everlasting burnings.

You have often been exhorted to fly from the "wrath to come." This devouring fire, these everlasting burnings, of which we have been speaking, are *the wrath to come.* You

hear of this fire, of these burnings, and of that fearfulness which will seize and surprise sinners in Zion hereafter; and O what reason have you of thankfulness that you only hear of them, that you do not as yet feel them, and that they have not already taken hold of you? They are, as it were, following you, and coming nearer and nearer every day. Those fierce flames are already kindled in the wrath of God; yea, the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God burn against you; it is ready for you: that pit is prepared for you, with fire and much wood, and the wrath of the Lord, as a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

Lot was with great urgency hastened out of Sodom, and commanded to make haste, and fly for his life, and escape to the mountains, lest he should be consumed in those flames which burned up Sodom and Gomorrah. But that burning was a mere spark to that devouring fire, and those everlasting burnings of which you are in danger. Therefore improve the present opportunity.

Now, God is pleased again to pour out his spirit upon us; and he is doing great things among us. God is indeed come again, the same great God who so wonderfully appeared among us some years ago, and who hath since, for our sins, departed from us, left us so long in so dull and dead a state, and hath let sinners alone in their sins; so that there have been scarcely any signs to be seen of any such work as conversion. That same God is now come again; he is really come in like manner, and begins, as he did before, gloriously to manifest his mighty power, and the riches of his grace. He brings sinners out of darkness into marvellous light. He rescues poor captive souls out of the hands of Satan; he saves persons from the devouring fire: he plucks one and another as brands out of the burnings; he opens the prison-doors, and knocks off their chains, and brings out poor prisoners; he is now working salvation among us from this very destruction of which you have now heard.

Now, now, then, is the time; now is the blessed opportunity to escape those everlasting burnings. Now God hath again set open the same fountain among us, and gives one more happy opportunity for souls to escape. Now he hath set open a wide door, and he stands in the door-way, calling and begging with a loud voice to the sinners of Zion: Come, saith he, come, fly from the wrath to come; here is a refuge for you; fly hither for refuge; lay hold on the hope set before you.

A little while ago, it was uncertain whether we should ever see such an opportunity again. If it had always continued as it hath been for some years past,* almost all of you would surely

* This was written in 1740, five or six years after the former revival had ceased.

have gone to hell; in a little time, fearfulness would have surprised you, and you would have been cast into that devouring fire, and those everlasting burnings. But in infinite mercy God gives another opportunity; and blessed are your eyes, that they see it, if you did but know your own opportunity.

You have had your life spared through these six years past, to this very time, to another outpouring of the Spirit. What would you have done, if you had died before it came? How doleful would your case have been! But you have reason to bless God that it was not so, and that you are yet alive, and now again see a blessed day of grace. And will you not improve it! Have you not so much love to your poor souls, as to improve such an opportunity as this?

Some, there is reason to think, have lately fled for refuge to Christ; and will you be willing to stay behind still, poor miserable captives, condemned to suffer for ever in the lake of fire? Hereafter, you will see those of your neighbours and acquaintance, who are converted, mounting up as with wings, with songs of joy, to meet their Lord; and if you remain unconverted, you, at the same time, will be surprised with fear, and horror will take hold of you, because of the devouring fire, and the everlasting burnings.

It is an awful thing to think of, that there are now some persons in this very congregation, here and there, who will be the subjects of that very misery of which we have now heard, although it be so dreadful, although it be so intolerable, and although it be eternal! There are, probably, some now reading or hearing this discourse, who shall be seen, at the day of judgment, among the devils, at the left hand of the judge, with frighted, ghastly countenances; wringing their hands, gnashing their teeth, shrieking and crying out.

Now we know not their names, nor where to look for them. But God knoweth their names, and now seeth and knoweth what they think, and how much they regard the warnings which are given them this day. We have not the least reason to suppose any other than that some of you will hereafter see others entering into glory with Christ, and saints, and angels, while you, with dreadful horror, shall see the fire begin to kindle about you. It may be, that the persons are now blessing themselves in their own hearts, and each one saying with himself, Well, I do not intend it shall be I. Every one hopes to go to heaven; none would, by any means, miss of it. If any thought they should miss of it, they would be greatly amazed. But all will not go thither; it will undoubtedly be the portion of some to toss and tumble for ever among the fiery billows of God's wrath.

It is not to be supposed, but that there are some here who will not be in earnest; let them have ever so good an opportunity to obtain heaven, they will not thoroughly improve it. Tell

them of hell as often as you will, and set it out in as lively colours as you will, they will be slack and slothful; and they will never be likely to obtain heaven, while they are sleeping, and dreaming, and intending, and hoping. The wrath of God, which pursues them, will take them by the heels; hell, that follows after, will overtake them; fearfulness will surprise them, and a tempest will steal them away.

Nor is it to be supposed, that all who are now seeking, will hold out; some will backslide; they will be unsteady. If now they seem to be pretty much engaged, it will not hold. Times will probably alter by and by, and they having not obtained grace, there will be many temptations to backsliding, with which they will comply. The hearts of men are very unsteady; they are not to be trusted. Men are very short winded; they cannot tell how to have patience to wait upon God; they are soon discouraged. Some that are now under convictions, may lose them. Perhaps they will not leave off seeking salvation at once; but they will come to it by degrees. After a while, they will begin to hearken to excuses, not to be quite so constant in duty; they will begin to think that they need not be quite so strict; they will say to themselves, they see no hurt in such and such things; they see not but they may practise them without any great guilt. Thus giving way to temptations, and hearkening to excuses, they will, by degrees, lose their convictions, and become secure in sin.

There were some who were guilty of backsliding, the last time of the revival of religion among us. While the talk upon religious subjects was generally kept alive, they continued to seek; but when this began to abate, and they saw others less zealous than they had been, and especially when they saw some miscarriages of professors, they began to grow more careless, to seek less earnestly, and to plead these things as an excuse. And they are left behind still; they are to this day in a miserable condemned state, in danger of the devouring fire, and of everlasting burnings; in twice so dangerous a state as they were in before they were awakened; and God only knows what will become of them. And as it was then, so we dread it will be now.

Some who are now in a natural condition, are doubtless near death; they have not long to live in the world, and if they seek in a dull way, or if, after they have sought for a while they are guilty of backsliding, death will come upon them long enough before there will come such another opportunity. When they leave off seeking, it will not be without a design of seeking again some time or other; but death will be too quick for them. It is not the manner of death to wait upon men, while they take time to indulge their sloth, and gratify their lusts. When his appointed time comes, he will do his work. Will you put off in hope of seeing another such time seven years hence? Alas!

how many of those who are now in a natural condition may be in hell before another seven years shall have elapsed!

Therefore now let every one look to himself. It is for your own souls salvation. If you be foolish, and will not hearken to counsel, will not improve the opportunity when it is given you, and will not enter into such an open door, you alone must bear it. If you shall miss this opportunity, and quench your convictions now, and there shall come another time of the outpouring of the spirit, you will be far less likely to have any profit by it; as we see now God chiefly moves on the hearts of those who are very young, who are brought forward upon the stage of action since the last outpouring of the Spirit, who were not then come to years of so much understanding, and consequently not so much in the way of the influence of the Spirit. As to those who were grown up, and had convictions then, and quenched them, the most of these are abundantly more hardened, and seem to be more passed over. So it will probably be with you hereafter, if you miss this opportunity, and quench the convictions of the spirit which you have now.

As to you who had awakenings the last time of the outpouring of the spirit, and have quenched them, and remain to this day in a natural condition, let me call upon you also, now that God is giving you one more such opportunity. If passing in impenitence through one such opportunity hath so hardened you, and hath been such a great disadvantage to you, how sad will your case be, if you shall now miss another! Will you not now thoroughly awake out of sleep, bestir yourselves for your salvation, and resolve now to begin again, and never leave off more? Many fled for refuge from the devouring fire before, and you were left behind. Others have fled for refuge now, and still you are left behind; and will you always remain behind? Consider, can you dwell with devouring fire? can you dwell with everlasting burnings? Shall children, babes and sucklings, go into the kingdom of God before you?

How will you hereafter bear to see them coming and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, when yourselves are thrust out, and are surprised with fearfulness at the sight of that devouring fire, and those everlasting burnings, into which you are about to be cast? Take heed lest a like threatening be fulfilled upon you with that which we have in Numb. xiv. 22, 23. "Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers; neither shall any of them that provoked me see it." Together with ver. 31. "But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised."

SERMON XII.*

WHEN THE WICKED SHALL HAVE FILLED UP THE MEASURE OF THEIR SIN, WRATH WILL COME UPON THEM TO THE UTTERMOST.

1 Thess. ii. 16.

To fill up their sins alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

In verse 14. the apostle commends the Christian Thessalonians that they became the followers of the churches of God in Judea, both in faith and in sufferings; in *faith*, in that they received the word, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God: in *sufferings*, in that they had suffered like things of their own countrymen, as *they* had of the Jews. Upon which the apostle sets forth the persecuting, cruel, and perverse wickedness of that people, "who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have," says he, "persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved." Then come in the words of the text; "To fill up their sins alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

In these words we may observe two things:

1. To what effect was the heinous wickedness and obstinacy of the Jews, viz. *to fill up their sins.* God hath set bounds to every man's wickedness; he suffers men to live, and to go on in sin, till they have filled up their measure, and then cuts them off. To this effect was the wickedness and obstinacy of the Jews: they were exceedingly wicked, and thereby filled up the measure of their sins a great pace. And

* Dated May, 1735.

the reason why they were permitted to be so obstinate under the preaching and miracles of Christ, and of the apostles, and under all the means used with them, was that they might fill up the measure of their sins. This is agreeable to what Christ said, Matt. xxiii. 31, 32. "Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers."

2. The punishment of their wickedness: "The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." There is a connexion between the measure of men's sin, and the measure of punishment. When they have filled up the measure of their sin, then is filled up the measure of God's wrath.

The degree of their punishment, is the *uttermost* degree. This may respect both a national and personal punishment. If we take it as a *national* punishment, a little after the time when the epistle was written, wrath came upon the nation of the Jews to the uttermost, in their terrible destruction by the Romans; when, as Christ said, "was great tribulation, such as never was since the beginning of the world to that time," Matt. xxiv. 21. That nation had before suffered many of the fruits of divine wrath for their sins; but this was beyond all, this was their highest degree of punishment as a nation. If we take it as a *personal* punishment, then it respects their punishment in hell. God often punishes men very dreadfully in this world; but in hell "wrath comes on them to the *uttermost*." By this expression is also denoted the *certainty* of this punishment. For though the punishment was then future, yet it is spoken of as present: "The wrath *is* come upon them to the uttermost." It was as certain as if it had already taken place. God, who knows all things, speaks of things that are not as though they were; for things present and things future are equally certain with him. It also denotes the *near approach* of it. *The wrath is come;* i. e. it is just at hand; it is at the door; as it proved with respect to that nation; their terrible destruction by the Romans was soon after the apostle wrote this epistle.

Doctrine. When those that continue in sin shall have filled up the measure of their sin, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost.

I. Prop. There is a *certain measure* that God hath set to the sin of every wicked man. God says concerning the sin of man, as he says to the raging waves of the sea, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further. The measure of some is much greater than of others. Some reprobates commit but a little sin in comparison with others, and so are to endure proportionably a smaller punishment. There are many vessels of wrath; but

some are smaller, and others greater vessels; some will contain comparatively but little wrath, others a greater measure of it. Sometimes, when we see men go to dreadful lengths, and become very heinously wicked, we are ready to wonder that God lets them alone. He sees them go on in such audacious wickedness, and keeps silence, nor does any thing to interrupt them, but they go smoothly on, and meet with no hurt. But sometimes the reason why God lets them alone is, because they have not filled up the measure of their sins. When they live in dreadful wickedness, they are but filling up the measure which God hath *limited* for them. This is sometimes the reason why God suffers very wicked men to live so long; because their iniquity is not full: Gen. xv. 16. "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." For this reason also God sometimes suffers them to live in prosperity. Their prosperity is a snare to them, and an occasion of their sinning a great deal more. Wherefore God suffers them to have such a snare, because he suffers them to fill up a larger measure. So, for this cause, he sometimes suffers them to live under great light, and great means and advantages, at the same time to neglect and misimprove all. Every one shall live till he hath filled up his measure.

II. Prop. While men continue in sin, they are filling the measure set them. This is the work in which they spend their whole lives; they begin in their childhood; and, if they live to grow old in sin, they still go on with this work. It is the work with which every day is filled up. They may alter their business in other respects; they may sometimes be about one thing, and sometimes about another; but they never change from this work of filling up the measure of their sins. Whatever they put their hands to, they are still employed in this work. This is the first thing that they set themselves about when they awake in the morning, and the last thing they do at night. They are all the while treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. It is a gross mistake of some natural men, who think that when they read and pray, they do not add to their sins; but, on the contrary, think they diminish their guilt by these exercises. They think, that instead of adding to their sins, they do something to satisfy for their past offences; but, instead of that, they do but add to the measure by their best prayers, and by those services with which they themselves are most pleased.

III. Prop. When once the measure of their sins is filled up, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost. God will then wait no longer upon them. Wicked men think that God is altogether such an one as themselves, because, when they commit such wickedness, he keeps silence. "Because

judgment against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the children of men is fully set in them to do evil." But when once they shall have filled up the measure of their sins, judgment will be executed; God will not bear with them any longer. Now is the day of grace, and the day of patience, which they spend in filling up their sins; but when their sins shall be full, then will come the day of wrath, the day of the fierce anger of God.—God often executes his wrath on ungodly men, in a less degree, in this world. He sometimes brings afflictions upon them, and that in wrath. Sometimes he expresses his wrath in very sore judgments; sometimes he appears in a terrible manner, not only outwardly, but also in the inward expressions of it on their consciences. Some, before they died, have had the wrath of God inflicted on their souls in degrees that have been intolerable. But these things are only forerunners of their punishment, only slight foretastes of wrath. God never stirs up all his wrath against wicked men while in this world; but when once wicked men shall have filled up the measure of their sins, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost; and that in the following respects:

1. Wrath will come upon them without any *restraint* or moderation in the degree of it. God doth always lay, as it were, a restraint upon himself; he doth not stir up his wrath; he stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind; he lets not his arm light down on wicked men with its full weight. But when sinners shall have filled up the measure of their sins, there will be no caution, no restraint. His rough wind will not be stayed nor moderated. The wrath of God will be poured out like fire. He will come forth, not only in anger, but in the fierceness of his anger; he will execute wrath with power, so as to show what his wrath is, and make his power known. There will be nothing to alleviate his wrath; his heavy wrath will lie on them, without any thing to lighten the burthen, or to keep off, in any measure, the full weight of it from pressing the soul. His eye will not spare, neither will he regard the sinner's cries and lamentations, however loud and bitter. Then shall wicked men know, that God is the Lord; they shall know how great that majesty is which they have despised, and how dreadful that threatened wrath is which they have so little regarded. Then shall come on wicked men that punishment which they deserve. God will exact of them the uttermost farthing. Their iniquities are marked before him; they are all written in his book; and, in the future world, he will reckon with them, and they must pay all the debt. Their sins are laid up in store with God; they are sealed up among his treasures; and them he will recompense, even recompense into their bosoms. The consummate degree of punishment will not be executed till the day of judgment; but the wicked are sealed over to this con-

summate punishment immediately after death; they are cast into hell, and there bound in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day; and they know that the highest degree of punishment is coming upon them. Final wrath will be executed without any mixture; all mercy, all enjoyments will be taken away. God sometimes expresses his wrath in this world; but here good things and evil are mixed together; in the future, there will be only evil things.

2. Wrath will then be executed without any *merciful* circumstances. The judgments which God executes on ungodly men in this world, are attended with many merciful circumstances. There is much patience and long-suffering, together with judgment; judgments are joined with continuance of opportunity to seek mercy. But in hell there will be no more exercises of divine patience. The judgments which God exercises on ungodly men in this world are warnings to them to avoid greater punishments; but the wrath which will come upon them, when they shall have filled up the measure of their sin, will not be of the nature of warnings. Indeed they will be effectually awakened, and made thoroughly sensible, by what they shall suffer; yet their being awakened and made sensible will do them no good. Many a wicked man hath suffered very awful things from God in this world, which have been a means of saving good; but that wrath which sinners shall suffer after death will be no way for their good. God will have no merciful design in it; neither will it be possible that they should get any good by that or by any thing else.

3. Wrath will so be executed, as to perfect the work to which wrath tends, viz. *utterly to undo* the subject of it. Wrath is often so executed in this life, as greatly to distress persons, and bring them into great calamity; yet not so as to complete the ruin of those who suffer it; but in another world, it will be so executed, as to finish their destruction, and render them utterly and perfectly undone; it will take away all comfort, all hope, and all support. The soul will be, as it were, utterly crushed; the wrath will be wholly intolerable. It must sink, and will utterly sink, and will have no more strength to keep itself from sinking, than a worm would have to keep itself from being crushed under the weight of a mountain. The wrath will be so great, so mighty and powerful, as wholly to abolish all manner of welfare: Matt. xxi. 44. "But on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

4. When persons shall have filled up the measure of their sin, that wrath will come upon them which is *eternal*. Though men may suffer very terrible and awful judgments in this world, yet those judgments have an end. They may be long continued,

yet they commonly admit of relief. Temporal distresses and sorrows have intermissions and respite, and commonly by degrees abate and wear off; but the wrath that shall be executed, when the measure of sin shall have been filled up, will have no end. Thus it will be to the uttermost as to its duration; it will be of so long continuance, that it will be impossible it should be longer. Nothing can be longer than eternity.

5. When persons shall have filled up the measure of their sin, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost of what is *threatened*. Sin is an infinite evil; and the punishment which God hath threatened against it is very dreadful. The threatenings of God against the workers of iniquity are very awful; but these threatenings are never fully accomplished in this world. However dreadful things some men may suffer in this life, yet God never fully executes his threatenings for so much as one sin, till they have filled up the whole measure. The threatenings of the law are never answered by any thing that any man suffers here. The most awful judgment in this life doth not answer God's threatenings, either in degree, or in circumstances, or in duration. If the greatest sufferings that ever are endured in this life should be eternal, it would not answer the threatening. Indeed temporal judgments *belong* to the threatenings of the law; but these are not *answered* by them; they are but foretastes of the punishment. "The wages of sin is death." No expressions of wrath that are suffered before men have filled up the measure of their sin, are its full wages. But *then*, God will reckon with them, and will recompense into their bosoms the full deserved sum.

APPLICATION.

The use I would make of this doctrine is, of warning to natural men, to rest no longer in sin, and to make haste to flee from it. The things which have been said, under this doctrine, may well be awakening, awful considerations to you. It is awful to consider whose wrath it is that abides upon you, and of what wrath you are in danger. It is impossible to express the misery of a natural condition. It is like being in Sodom, with a dreadful storm of fire and brimstone hanging over it, just ready to break forth, and to be poured down upon it. The clouds of divine vengeance are full, and just ready to burst. Here let those who yet continue in sin, in this town, consider particularly,

1. Under what *great means* and advantages you continue in sin. God is now favouring us with very great and extraordinary means and advantages, in that we have such extraordinary tokens of the presence of God among us; his spirit is so re-

markably poured out, and multitudes of all ages, and all sorts, are converted and brought home to Christ. God appears among us in the most extraordinary manner, perhaps, that ever he did in New-England. The children of Israel saw many mighty works of God, when he brought them out of Egypt; but we, at this day, see works more mighty, and of a more glorious nature.

We, who live under such light, have had loud calls; but now, above all. Now is a day of salvation. The fountain hath been set open among us in an extraordinary manner, and hath stood open for a considerable time: Yet you continue in sin, and the calls that you have hitherto had, have not brought you to be washed in it. What extraordinary advantages have you lately enjoyed, to stir you up! How hath every thing in the town, of late, been of that tendency! Those things which used to be the greatest hinderances, have been removed. You have not the ill examples of immoral persons to be a temptation to you. There is not now that vain worldly talk, and ill company, to divert you, and to be a hinderance to you, which there used to be. Now you have multitudes of good examples set before you; there are many now all around you, who, instead of diverting and hindering you, are earnestly desirous of your salvation, and willing to do all that they can to move you to flee to Christ: they have a thirsting desire for it. The chief talk in the town has of late been about the things of religion, and has been such as hath tended to promote, and not to hinder, your souls' good. Every thing all around you hath tended to stir you up; and will you yet continue in sin?

Some of you have continued in sin till you are far advanced in life. You were warned when you were children; and some of you had awakenings then; however, the time went away. You became men and women; and then you were stirred up again, you had the strivings of God's Spirit; and some of you have fixed the times when you would make thorough work of seeking salvation. Some of you perhaps determined to do it when you should be married and settled in the world; others when you should have finished such a business, and when your circumstances should be so and so altered. Now these times have come, and are past; yet you continue in sin.

Many of you have had remarkable warnings of Providence. Some of you have been warned by the deaths of near *relations*; you have stood by, and seen others die and go into eternity; yet this hath not been effectual. Some of you have been near death *yourselves*, have been brought nigh the grave in sore sickness, and were full of your promises how you would behave yourselves, if it should please God to spare your lives. Some of you have very narrowly escaped death by dangerous

accidents; but God was pleased to spare you, to give you a further space to repent; yet you continue in sin.

Some of you have seen times of remarkable out-pourings of the Spirit of God in this town in times past; but it had no good effect on you. *You* had the strivings of the Spirit of God too, as well as others. God did not pass so by your door, but that he came and knocked; yet you stood it out. Now God hath come again in a more remarkable manner than ever before, and hath been pouring out his Spirit for some months, in its most gracious influence: yet you remain in sin until now. In the beginning of this awakening, you were warned to flee from wrath, and to forsake your sins. You were told what a wide door there was open, what an accepted time it was, and were urged to press into the kingdom of God. And many did press in; they forsook their sins, and believed in Christ; *but you, when you had seen it, repented not, that you might believe him.*

Then you were warned again, and still others have been pressing and thronging into the kingdom of God. Many have fled for refuge and have laid hold on Christ: yet you continue in sin and unbelief. You have seen multitudes of all sorts, of all ages, young and old, flocking to Christ, and many of about your age and your circumstances; but you still are in the same miserable condition in which you used to be. You have seen persons daily flocking to Christ, as doves to their windows. God hath not only poured out his Spirit on this town, but also on other towns around us, and they are flocking in there as well as here. This blessing spreads further and further; many, far and near, seem to be setting their faces Zion-ward: yet you who live here, where this work first began, continue behind still; you have no lot nor portion in this matter.

2. How *dreadful* the wrath of God is, when it is executed to the uttermost. To make you in some measure sensible of that, I desire you to consider whose wrath it is. The wrath of a king is the roaring of a lion; but this is the wrath of Jehovah, the Lord God Omnipotent. Let us consider, what can we rationally think of it? How dreadful must be the wrath of such a Being, when it comes upon a person to the uttermost, without any pity, or moderation, or merciful circumstances! What must be the uttermost of his wrath, who made heaven and earth by the word of his power; who spake, and it was done, who commanded, and it stood fast! What must his wrath be, who commandeth the sun, and it rises not, and sealeth up the stars! What must his wrath be, who shaketh the earth out of its place, and causeth the pillars of heaven to tremble! What must his wrath be, who rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, who removeth the mountains out of their places, and overturneth them in his anger? What must his wrath be, whose majesty is

so awful, that no man could live in the sight of it! What must the wrath of such a Being be, when it comes to the uttermost, when he makes his majesty appear and shine bright in the misery of wicked men! And what is a worm of the dust before the fury and under the weight of this wrath, which the stoutest devils cannot bear, but utterly sink, and are crushed under it. Consider how dreadful the wrath of God is sometimes in this world, only in a little taste or view of it. Sometimes, when God only enlightens conscience, to have some sense of his wrath, it causes the stout-hearted to cry out; nature is ready to sink under it, when indeed it is but a little glimpse of divine wrath that is seen. This hath been observed in many cases. But if a slight taste and apprehension of wrath be so dreadful and intolerable, what must it be when it comes upon persons to the uttermost! When a few drops or a little sprinkling of wrath is so distressing and overbearing to the soul, how must it be when God opens the flood-gates, and lets the mighty deluge of his wrath come pouring down upon men's guilty heads, and brings in all his waves and billows upon their souls! How little of God's wrath will sink them! Psalm ii. 12. "When his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

3. Consider, you know not what wrath God may be about to execute upon wicked men in *this world*. Wrath may, in some sense, be coming upon them, in the present life, to the uttermost, for ought we know. When it is said of the Jews, "the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost," respect is had, not only to the execution of divine wrath on that people in hell, but that terrible destruction of Judea and Jerusalem, which was then near approaching, by the Romans. We know not but the wrath is now coming, in some peculiarly awful manner, on the wicked world. God seems, by the things which he is doing among us, to be coming forth for some great thing. The work which hath been lately wrought among us is no ordinary thing. He doth not work in his usual way, but in a way very extraordinary; and it is probable that it is a forerunner of some very great revolution. We must not pretend to say what is in the womb of Providence, or what is in the book of God's secret decrees; yet we may and ought to discern the signs of these times.

Though God be now about to do glorious things for his church and people, yet it is probable that they will be accompanied with dreadful things to his enemies. It is the manner of God, when he brings about any glorious revolution for his people, at the same time to execute very awful judgments on his enemies: Deut. xxxii. 43. "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people; for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be mer-

ciful unto his land, and to his people." Isa. iii. 10, 11. "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Isa. lxv. 13, 14. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit." We find in scripture, that where glorious times are prophesied to God's people, there are at the same time awful judgments foretold to his enemies. What God is now about to do, we know not: but this we may know, that there will be no safety to any but those who are in the ark.—Therefore it behoves all to haste and flee for their lives, to get into a safe condition, to get into Christ; then they need not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof: for God will be their refuge and strength; they need not be afraid of evil tidings: their hearts may be fixed, trusting in the Lord.

SERMON XIII.*

THE END OF THE WICKED CONTEMPLATED BY THE RIGHTEOUS; OR THE TORMENTS OF THE WICKED IN HELL NO OCCASION OF GRIEF TO THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

Rev. xviii. 20.

Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.

INTRODUCTION.

In this chapter we have a very particular account of the fall of Babylon, or the anti-christian church, and of the vengeance of God executed upon her. Here it is proclaimed that Babylon the great is fallen, and become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird; that her sins had reached unto heaven, and that God had remembered her iniquity; that God gave commandment to reward her, as she had rewarded others, to double unto her double according to her works; in the cup she had filled, to fill to her double, and how much she had glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow to give her. And it is declared, that these plagues are come upon her in one day, death, mourning, and famine; and that she should be utterly burnt with fire; *because strong is the Lord who judgeth her.*

These things have respect partly to the overthrow of the anti-christian church in this world, and partly to the vengeance of God upon her in the world to come. There is no necessity to suppose, that such extreme torments as are here mentioned will ever be executed upon Papists, or upon the anti-christian church in this world. There will indeed be a dreadful and

* The substance of two posthumous discourses, dated March, 1773.

visible overthrow of that idolatrous church in this world. But we are not to understand the plagues here mentioned as exclusive of the vengeance which God will execute on the wicked upholders and promoters of anti-christianism, and on the cruel anti-christian persecutors, in another world.

This is evident by ver. 3. of the next chapter, where, with reference to the same destruction of antichrist which is spoken of in this chapter, it is said, "her smoke rose up for ever and ever;" in which words the eternal punishment of antichrist is evidently spoken of. Antichrist is here represented as being cast into hell, and there remaining for ever after; he hath no place any where else but in hell. This is evident by ver. 20. of the next chapter, where, concerning the destruction of antichrist, it is said, "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

Not but that the wicked anti-christians have in all ages gone to hell as they died, and not merely at the fall of antichrist; but *then* the wrath of God against antichrist, of which damnation is the fruit, will be made eminently visible here on earth, by many remarkable tokens. Then antichrist will be confined to hell, and will have no more place here on earth; much after the same manner as the devil is said at the beginning of Christ's thousand years reign on earth, to be cast into the bottomless pit, as you may see in the beginning of the twentieth chapter. Not but that he had his place in the bottomless pit before; he was cast down to hell when he fell at first: 2 Pet. ii. 4. *Cast them down to hell, and deliver them into chains of darkness.* But now, when he shall be suffered to deceive the nations no more, his kingdom will be confined to hell.

In this text is contained part of what John heard uttered upon this occasion; and in these words we may observe,

1. To whom this voice is directed, viz. to *the holy prophets and apostles*, and the rest of the inhabitants of the heavenly world. When God shall pour out his wrath upon the anti-christian church, it will be seen, and taken notice of by all the inhabitants of heaven, even by holy prophets and apostles. Neither will they see as unconcerned spectators.

2. What they are called upon by the voice to do, viz. to *rejoice over Babylon* now destroyed, and lying under the wrath of God. They are not directed to rejoice over her in prosperity but in flames, and beholding the smoke of her burning ascending up for ever and ever.

3. A reason given: For *God hath avenged* YOU ON HER; i. e. God hath executed just vengeance upon her, for shedding

your blood, and cruelly persecuting you. For thus the matter is represented, that antichrist had been guilty of shedding the blood of the holy prophets and apostles, as in chap. xvi. 6. *For they have shed the blood of saints and of prophets.* And in ver. 24. of this context, *In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all them that were slain on the earth.* Not that antichrist had literally shed the blood of the prophets and apostles; but he had shed the blood of those who were their followers, who were of the same spirit, and of the same church, and same mystical body. The prophets and apostles in heaven are nearly related and united to the saints on earth; they live, as it were, in true Christians in all ages. So that by slaying these, persecutors show that they would slay the prophets and apostles, if they could; and they indeed do it as much as in them lies.

On the same account, Christ says of the Jews in his time, Luke xi. 50. "That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation." So Christ himself is said to have been crucified in the anti-christian church, chap. xi. 8. "And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." So all the inhabitants of heaven, all the saints from the beginning of the world, and the angels also, are called upon to rejoice over Babylon, because of God's vengeance upon her, wherein he avenges them; they all of them had in effect been injured and persecuted by antichrist. Indeed they are not called upon to rejoice in having their revenge glutted, but in seeing justice executed, and in seeing the love and tenderness of God towards them, manifested in his severity towards their enemies.

SECT. I.

When the saints in glory shall see the wrath of God executed on ungodly men, it will be no occasion of grief to them, but of rejoicing.

It is not only the sight of God's wrath executed on those wicked men who are of the anti-christian church, which will be occasion of rejoicing to the saints in glory; but also the sight of the destruction of all God's enemies: whether they have been the followers of antichrist or not, that alters not the case, if they have been the enemies of God, and of Jesus Christ. All wicked men will at last be destroyed together, as being

united in the same cause and interest, as being all of Satan's army. They will all stand together at the day of judgment, as being all of the same company.

And if we understand the text to have respect only to a temporal execution of God's wrath on his enemies; that will not alter the case. The thing they are called upon to rejoice at, is the execution of God's wrath upon his and their enemies. And if it be matter of rejoicing to them to see justice executed in part upon them, or to see the beginning of the execution of it in this world; for the same reason will they rejoice with greater joy, in beholding it fully executed. For the thing here mentioned as the foundation of their joy, is the execution of just vengeance: *Rejoice, for God hath avenged you on her.*

Prop. 1. The glorified saints will see the wrath of God executed upon ungodly men. This the scriptures plainly teach us, that the righteous and the wicked in the other world see each other's state. Thus the rich man in hell, and Lazarus and Abraham in heaven, are represented as seeing each other's opposite states, in the 16th chap. of Luke. The wicked in their misery will see the saints in the kingdom of heaven; Luke xiii. 28, 29. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."

So the saints in glory will see the misery of the wicked under the wrath of God. Isa. lxvi. 24. "And they shall go forth and look on the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched." And, Rev. xiv. 9. 10. "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." The saints are not here mentioned, being included in Christ, as his members. The church is the fulness of Christ, and is called Christ, 1 Cor. xii. 12. So in the 19th chapter, ver. 2, 3. the smoke of Babylon's torment is represented as rising up for ever and ever, in the sight of the heavenly inhabitants.

At the day of judgment, the saints in glory at Christ's right hand, will see the wicked at the left hand in their amazement and horror; will hear the Judge pronounce sentence upon them, saying, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" and will see them go away into everlasting punishment. But the scripture seems to hold forth to us, that the saints will not only see the misery of the wicked at the day of judgment, but the fore-mentioned texts imply, that the state of the damned in hell will be in the view of the heavenly inhabitants: that the two

worlds of happiness and misery will be in view of each other. Though we know not by what means, nor after what manner it will be; yet the scriptures certainly lead us to think, that they will some way or other have a direct and immediate apprehension of each other's state. The saints in glory will see how the damned are tormented; they will see God's threatenings fulfilled, and his wrath executed upon them.

Prop II. When they shall see it, it will be no occasion of *grief* to them. The miseries of the damned in hell will be inconceivably great. When they shall come to hear the wrath of the Almighty poured out upon them without mixture, and executed upon them without pity or restraint, or any mitigation; it will doubtless cause anguish, and horror, and amazement vastly beyond all the sufferings and torments, that ever any man endured in this world; yea, beyond all extent of our words or thoughts. For God in executing wrath upon ungodly men will act like an Almighty God. The scripture calls this wrath, God's *fury*, and the *fierceness of his wrath;* and we are told that this is to show God's wrath, and to make his power known; or to make known how dreadful his wrath is, and how great his power.

The saints in glory will see this, and be far more sensible of it than now we can possibly be. They will be far more sensible how dreadful the wrath of God is, and will better understand how terrible the sufferings of the damned are; yet this will be no occasion of grief to them. They will not be sorry for the damned; it will cause no uneasiness or dissatisfaction to them; but on the contrary, when they have this sight, it will excite them to joyful praises.—These two things are evidences of it:

1. That the seeing of the wrath of God executed upon the damned, should cause grief in the saints in glory, is inconsistent with that state of perfect happiness in which they are. There can no such thing as grief enter, to be an allay to the happiness and joy of that world of blessedness. Grief is an utter stranger in that world. God hath promised that he will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more sorrow. Rev. xxi. 4. and chap. vii. 17.

2. The saints in heaven possess all things as their own, and therefore all things contribute to their joy and happiness. The scriptures teach that the saints in glory inherit all things. This God said in John's hearing, when he had the vision of the New Jerusalem; Rev. xxi. 7. And the scriptures teach us to understand this absolutely of all the works of creation and providence. 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." Here the apostle teaches, that all things in the world to come, or in the

future and eternal world, are the saints'; not only life but death; men and angels, and devils, heaven and hell, are theirs, to contribute to their joy and happiness. Therefore the damned and their misery, their sufferings and the wrath of God poured out upon them, will be an occasion of joy to them. If there were any thing whatsoever that did not contribute to their joy, but caused grief, then there would be something which would not be theirs.

That the torments of the damned are no matter of grief, but of joy to the inhabitants of heaven, is very clearly expressed in several passages of this book of Revelation; particularly by chap. xvi. 5—7. and chap. xix. at the beginning.

SECT. II.

Why the sufferings of the wicked will not be cause of grief to the righteous, but the contrary.

1. Negatively; it will not be because the saints in heaven are the subjects of any ill disposition; but on the contrary, this rejoicing of theirs will be the fruit of an amiable and excellent disposition; it will be the fruit of a perfect holiness and conformity to Christ, the holy lamb of God. The devil delights in the misery of men from cruelty, and from envy and revenge, and because he delights in misery, for its own sake, from a malicious disposition.

But it will be from exceedingly different principles, and for quite other reasons, that the just damnation of the wicked will be an occasion of rejoicing to the saints in glory. It will not be because they delight in seeing the misery of others absolutely considered. The damned suffering divine vengeance will be no occasion of joy to the saints merely as it is the misery of others, or because it is pleasant to them to behold the misery of others merely for its own sake. The rejoicing of the saints on this occasion is no argument, that they are not of a most amiable and excellent spirit, or that there is any defect on that account, that there is any thing wanting, which would render them of a more amiable disposition. It is no argument that they have not a spirit of goodness and love reigning in them in absolute perfection, or that herein they do not excel the greatest instances of it on earth, as much as the stars are higher than the earth, or the sun brighter than a glow-worm.

And whereas the heavenly inhabitants are in the text called upon to rejoice over Babylon, because God had avenged them on her; it is not to be understood, that they are to rejoice in having their revenge glutted, but to rejoice in seeing

the justice of God executed, and in seeing his love to them in executing it on his enemies.

2. Positively; the sufferings of the damned will be no occasion of grief to the heavenly inhabitants, as they will have *no love nor pity* to the damned, as such. It will be no argument of want of a spirit of love in them, that they do not love the damned; for the heavenly inhabitants will know that it is not fit that they should love them, because they will know then, that God has no love to them, nor pity for them: but that they are the objects of God's eternal hatred. And they will then be perfectly conformed to God in their wills and affections. They will love what God loves, and that only. However the saints in heaven may have loved the damned while here, especially those of them who were near and dear to them in this world, they will have no love to them hereafter.

It will be an occasion of their rejoicing, as the *glory of God* will appear in it. The glory of God appears in all his works: and therefore there is no work of God which the saints in glory shall behold and contemplate, but what will be an occasion of rejoicing to them. God glorifies himself in the eternal damnation of ungodly men. God glorifies himself in all that he doth; but he glorifies himself principally in his eternal disposal of his intelligent creatures, some are appointed to everlasting life, and others left to everlasting death.

The saints in heaven will be perfect in their love to God; their hearts will be all a flame of love to God, and therefore they will greatly value the glory of God, and will exceedingly delight in seeing him glorified. The saints highly value the glory of God here in this, but how much more will they so do in the world to come. They will therefore greatly rejoice in all that contributes to that glory. The glory of God will in their esteem be of greater consequence, than the welfare of thousands and millions of souls.—Particularly,

(1.) They will rejoice in seeing the *justice* of God glorified in the sufferings of the damned. The misery of the damned, dreadful as it is, is but what justice *requires*. They in heaven will see and know it much more clearly, than any of us do here, they will see how perfectly just and righteous their punishment is, and therefore how properly inflicted by the supreme Governer of the world. They will greatly rejoice to see justice take place, to see that all the sin and wickedness that have been committed in the world, is remembered of God, and has its due punishment. The sight of this strict and immutable justice of God will render him amiable and adorable in their eyes. They will rejoice when they see him who is their Father and eternal portion, so glorious in his justice.

Then there will be no remaining difficulties about the justice of God, about the absolute decrees of God, or any

thing pertaining to the dispensations of God towards men. But divine justice in the destruction of the wicked will then appear as light without darkness, and will shine as the sun without clouds, and on this account will they sing joyful songs of praise to God, as we see the saints and angels do, when God pours the vials of his wrath upon antichrist; Rev. xvi. 5—7. They sing joyfully to God on this account, that true and righteous are his judgments; Rev. xix. 1—6. They seeing God so strictly just, will make them value his love the more. Mercy and grace are more valuable on this account. The more they shall see of the justice of God, the more will they prize and rejoice in his love.

(2.) They will rejoice in it, as it will be a glorious manifestation of the *power* and *majesty* of God. God will show his own greatness in executing vengeance on ungodly men. This is mentioned as one end of the destruction of the ungodly: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" God will hereby show how much he is above his enemies. There are many now in the world, who proudly lift up themselves against God. There are many open opposers of the cause and interest of Christ. *They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.* Then God will show his glorious power in destroying these enemies.

The power of God is sometimes spoken of as very glorious, as appearing in the temporal destruction of his enemies; Exod. xv. 6. "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." But how much more glorious will it appear in his triumphing over, and dashing in pieces at once, all his enemies, wicked men and devils together, all his haughty foes! The power of God will gloriously appear in dashing to pieces his enemies as a potter's vessel. Moses rejoiced and sang when he saw God glorify his power in the destruction of Pharaoh and his host at the Red Sea. But how much more will the saints in glory rejoice, when they shall see God gloriously triumphing over all his enemies in their eternal ruin! Then it will appear how dreadful God is, and how dreadful a thing it is to disobey and condemn him. It is often mentioned as a part of the glory of God, that he is a terrible God. To see the majesty, and greatness, and terribleness of God, appearing in the destruction of his enemies, will cause the saints to rejoice; and when they shall see how great and terrible a being God is, how will they prize his favour! how will they rejoice that they are the objects of his love! how will they

praise him the more joyfully, that he should choose them to be his children, and to live in the enjoyment of him!

It will occasion rejoicing in them, as they will have the greater sense of *their own happiness*, by seeing the contrary misery. It is the nature of pleasure and pain, of happiness and misery, greatly to heighten the sense of each other. Thus the seeing of the happiness of others tends to make men more sensible of their own calamities; and the seeing of the calamities of others tends to heighten the sense of our own enjoyments.

When the saints in glory, therefore, shall see the doleful state of the damned, how will this heighten their sense of the blessedness of their own state, so exceedingly different from it! When they shall see how miserable others of their fellow-creatures are, who were naturally in the same circumstances with themselves; when they shall see the smoke of their torment, and the raging of the flames of their burning, and hear their dolorous shrieks and cries, and consider that they in the mean-time are in the most blissful state, and shall surely be in it to all eternity; how will they rejoice!

This will give them a joyful sense of the *grace and love of God to them*, because hereby they will see how great a benefit they have by it. When they shall see the dreadful miseries of the damned, and consider that they deserved the same misery, and that it was *sovereign grace*, and nothing else, which made them so much to differ from the damned, that, if it had not been for that, they would have been in the same condition; but that God from all eternity was pleased to set his love upon them, that Christ hath laid down his life for them, and hath made them thus gloriously happy for ever; O how will they admire that dying love of Christ, which has redeemed them from so great a misery, and purchased for them so great happiness, and has so distinguished them from others of their fellow-creatures! How joyfully will they sing to God and the Lamb, when they behold this!

SECT. III.

An Objection answered.

The objection is, "If we are apprehensive of the damnation of others now, it in nowise becomes us to rejoice at it, but to lament it. If we see others in imminent danger of going to hell, it is accounted a very sorrowful thing, and it is looked upon as an argument of a senseless and wicked spirit, to look upon it otherwise. When it is a very dead time with respect

to religion, and a very degenerate and corrupt time among a people, it is accounted a thing greatly to be lamented; and on this account, that at such times there are but few converted and saved, and many perish. Paul tells us, that he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart, because so many of the Jews were in a perishing state; Rom. ix. 1, 2, 3. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." And if a neighbour die, and his death be attended with circumstances, which look darkly as to the state of his soul, we account it a sorrowful thing, because he hath left us no more comfortable grounds to hope for his salvation. Why is it not then an unbecoming thing in the saints in glory to rejoice when they see the damnation of the ungodly?

Ans. 1. It is now our duty to love all men, though they are wicked; but it will not be a duty to love wicked men hereafter. Christ by many precepts in his word, hath made it our duty to love all men. We are commanded to love wicked men, and our enemies and persecutors. But this command doth not extend to the saints in glory, with respect to the damned in hell. Nor is there the same reason that it should. We ought now to love all, and even wicked men; we know not but that God loves them. However wicked any man is, yet we know not but that he is one whom God loved from eternity; we know not but that Christ loved him with a dying love, had his name upon his heart before the world was, and had respect to him when he endured those bitter agonies on the cross. We know not but that he is to be our companion in glory to all eternity.

But this is not the case in another world. The saints in glory will know concerning the damned in hell, that God never loved them, but that he hates them, and will be for ever hated of God. This hatred of God will be fully declared to them; they will see it, and will see the fruits of it in their misery. Therefore, when God has thus declared his hatred of the damned, and the saints see it, it will be no way becoming in the saints to love them, nor to mourn over them. It becomes the saints fully and perfectly to consent to what God doth, without any reluctance or opposition of spirit; yea it becomes them to rejoice in every thing that God sees meet to be done.

Ans. 2. We ought now to seek and be concerned for the salvation of wicked men, because now they are capable subjects of it. Wicked men, though they may be very wicked, yet are capable subjects of mercy. It is yet a day of grace with them, and they have the offers of salvation. Christ is as yet seeking their salvation; he is calling upon them, inviting and wooing

them; he stands at the door and knocks. He is using many means with them, is calling them, saying, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?* The day of his patience is yet continued to them; and if Christ is seeking their salvation, surely we ought to seek it.

God is wont now to make men the means of one another's salvation; yea, it is his ordinary way so to do. He makes the concern and endeavours of his people the means of bringing home many to Christ. Therefore they ought to be concerned for and endeavour it. But it will not be so in another world: there wicked men will be no longer capable subjects of mercy. The saints will know, that it is the will of God the wicked should be miserable to all eternity. It will therefore cease to be their duty any more to seek their salvation, or to be concerned about their misery. On the other hand, it will be their duty to rejoice in the will and glory of God. It is not our duty to be sorry that God hath executed just vengeance on the devils, concerning whom the will of God in their eternal state is already known to us.

Ans. 3. Rejoicing at the calamities of others now, rests not on the same grounds as that of the saints in glory. The evil of rejoicing at others' calamities now, consists in our envy, or revenge, or some such disposition is gratified therein; and not that God is glorified, that the majesty and justice of God gloriously shine forth.

Ans. 4. The different circumstances of our nature now, from what will be hereafter, make that a virtue now which will be no virtue then. For instance, if a man be of a virtuous disposition, the circumstances of our nature now are such, that it will necessarily show itself by natural affection, and to be without natural affection is a very vicious disposition; and is so mentioned in Rom. i. 31. But natural affection is no virtue in the saints in glory. Their virtue will exercise itself in a higher manner.

Ans. 5. The vengeance inflicted on many of the wicked will be a manifestation of God's love to the saints. One way whereby God shows his love to the saints, is by destroying their enemies. God hath said, *He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye.* And it is often mentioned in scripture, as an instance of the great love of God to his people, that his wrath is so awakened, when they are wronged and injured. Thus Christ hath promised that God will avenge his own elect, Luke xviii. 7.; and hath said, that *if any man offend one of his little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* Matt. xviii. 6.

So the saints in glory will see the great love of God to them, in the dreadful vengeance which he shall inflict on those

who have injured and persecuted them; and the view of this love of God to them will be just cause of their rejoicing. Thus, in the text, heaven and the holy apostles and prophets are called to rejoice over their enemies, because God hath avenged them of them.

SECT. IV.

The ungodly warned.

I shall apply this subject only in one use, viz. of *warning* to ungodly men. And in order to this, I desire such to consider,

1. How destitute of any comforting consideration your condition will be, if you perish at last. You will have none to pity you. Look which way you will, before or behind, on the right hand or left, look up to heaven, or look about you in hell, and you will see none to condole your case, or to exercise any pity towards you, in your dreadful condition. You must bear these flames, you must bear that torment and amazement, day and night, for ever, and never have the comfort of considering, that there is so much as one that pities your case; there never will one tear be dropped for you.

(1.) You have now been taught that you will have no pity from the *created inhabitants* of heaven. If you shall look to them, you will see them all rejoicing at the sight of the glory of God's justice, power, and terrible majesty, manifested in your torment. You will see them in a blissful and glorious state; you will see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God; you will see many come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and sit down in that glorious kingdom; and will see them all with one voice, and with united joy, praising God for glorifying himself in your destruction. You will wail and gnash your teeth under your own torments, and with envy of their happiness; but they will rejoice and sing: Isa. lxv. 13, 14. "Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.

(2.) God will exercise no pity towards you. If you might have his pity in any degree, that would be of more worth to you than thousands of worlds. That would make your case to be not without comfort and hope. But God will exercise no pity towards you. He hath often said concerning wicked men, that his eye shall not spare, neither will he have pity, (Ezek. v. 11. and vii. 4, 9. and viii. 18.) He will cast upon you, and

not spare; you will see nothing in God, and receive nothing from him, but perfect hatred, and the fierceness of his wrath; nothing but the mighty falls or outpourings of wrath upon you, every moment; and no cries will avail to move God to any pity or in the least to move him to lighten his hand, or assuage the fierceness and abate the power of your torments.

Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, will have no pity on you. Though he had so much love to sinners, as to be willing to lay down his life for them, and offers you the benefits of his blood, while you are in this world, and often calls upon you to accept them; yet then he will have no pity upon you. You never will hear any more instructions from him; he will utterly refuse to be your instructor: on the contrary he will be your judge, to pronounce sentence against you.

(3.) You will find none that will pity you in hell. The devils will not pity you, but will be your tormentors, as roaring lions, or hell-hounds, to tear you in pieces continually. And other wicked men who shall be there will be like devils; they will have no pity on you, but will hate and curse, and torment you. And you yourselves will be like devils; you will be like devils to yourselves, and will be your own tormentors.

2. Consider what an aggravation, what you have heard under this doctrine will be to your misery. Consider how it will be at the day of judgment, when you shall see Christ coming in the clouds of heaven, when you shall begin to wail and cry, as knowing that you are of those who are to be condemned; and perhaps you will be ready to fly to some of your godly friends; but you will obtain no help from them: you will see them unconcerned for you, with joyful countenances ascending to meet the Lord, and not the less joyful for the horror in which they see you. And when you shall stand before the tribunal at the left hand, among devils, trembling and astonished, and shall have the dreadful sentence passed upon you, you will at the same time see the blessed company of saints and angels at the right hand rejoicing, and shall hear them shout forth the praises of God, while they hear your sentence pronounced. You will then see those godly people, with whom you shall have been acquainted, and who shall have been your neighbours, and with whom you now often converse, rejoicing at the pronunciation and execution of your sentence.

Perhaps there are now some godly people, to whom you are near and dear, who are tenderly concerned for you, are ready to pity you under all calamities, and willing to help you; and particularly are tenderly concerned for your poor soul, and have put up many fervent prayers for you. How will you bear to hear these singing for joy of heart, while you are crying for sorrow of heart, and howling for vexation of spirit, and even

singing the more joyful for the glorious justice of God which they behold in your eternal condemnation!

You that have godly parents, who in this world have tenderly loved you, who were wont to look upon your welfare as their own, and were wont to be grieved for you when any thing calamitous befel you in this world, and especially were greatly concerned for the good of your souls, industriously sought, and earnestly prayed for their salvation; how will you bear to see them in the kingdom of God, crowned with glory? Or how will you bear to see them receiving the blessed sentence, and going up with shouts and songs, to enter with Christ into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, while you are amongst a company of devils, and are turned away with the most bitter cries, to enter into everlasting burnings, prepared for the devil and his angels? How will you bear to see your parents, who in this life had so dear an affection for you, now without any love to you, approving the sentence of condemnation, when Christ shall with indignation bid you depart, wretched, cursed creatures, into eternal burnings? How will you bear to see and hear them praising the Judge, for his justice exercised in pronouncing this sentence, and hearing it with a holy joy in their countenances, and shouting forth the praises and hallelujahs of God and Christ on that account?

When they shall see what manifestations of amazement there will be in you, at the hearing of this dreadful sentence, and that every syllable of it pierces you like a thunderbolt, and sinks you into the lowest depths of horror and despair: when they shall behold you with a frighted, amazed countenance, trembling and astonished, and shall hear you groan and gnash your teeth; these things will not move them at all to pity you, but you will see them with a holy joyfulness in their countenances, and with songs in their mouths. When they shall see you turned away and beginning to enter into the great furnace, and shall see how you shrink at it, and hear how you shriek and cry out; yet they will not be at all grieved for you, but at the same time you will hear from them renewed praises and hallelujahs for the true and righteous judgments of God, in so dealing with you.

Then you will doubtless remember how those your glorified parents seemed to be concerned for your salvation, while you were here in this world; you will remember how they were wont to counsel and warn you, and how little you regarded their counsels, and how they seemed to be concerned and grieved, and there appeared no more effect of their endeavours for the good of your souls. You will then see them praising God for executing just vengeance on you, for setting so light by their counsels and reproofs. However here they loved you, and were concerned for you, now they will rise up in judgment

against you, and will declare how your sins are aggravated by the endeavours which they to no purpose used with you, to bring you to forsake sin and practise virtue, and to seek and serve God; but you were obstinate under all, and would not hearken to them. They will declare how inexcusable you are upon this account. And when the judge shall execute the more terrible wrath upon you on this account, that you have made no better improvement of your parents' instructions, they will joyfully praise God for it. After they shall have seen you lie in hell thousands of years and your torment shall yet continue without any rest, day or night; they will not begin to pity you then; they will praise God, that his justice appears in the eternity of your misery.

You that have godly husbands, or wives, or brethren, or sisters, with whom you have been wont to dwell under the same roof, and to eat at the same table, consider how it will be with you, when you shall come to part with them; when they shall be taken and you left; Luke xvii. 34, 35, 36. "I tell you, in that night, there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left." However you may wail and lament, when you see them parted from you, they being taken and you left, you will see in them no signs of sorrow, that you are not taken with them: that you ascend not with them to meet the Lord in the air, but are left below to be consumed with the world, which is reserved unto fire, against the day of the perdition of ungodly men.

Those wicked men, who shall go to hell from under the labours of pious and faithful ministers, will see those ministers rejoicing and praising God upon the occasion of their destruction. Consider ye that have long lived under Mr. STODDARD's ministry,* and are yet in a natural condition, how dreadful it will be to you, to see him who was so tenderly concerned for the good of your souls while he was here, and so earnestly sought your salvation, to see him rising up in judgment against you, declaring your inexcusableness, declaring how often he warned you; how plainly he set your danger before you, and told you of the opportunity that you had; how fully he set forth the miserable condition in which you were, and the necessity there was that you should obtain an interest in Christ: how movingly and earnestly he exhorted you to get into a better state, and how regardless you were; how little you minded all that he said to you; how you went on still in your trespasses, hardened your necks, and made your hearts as an adamant, and refused to return! How dreadful will it be to you to hear him

* The author's grandfather and predecessor.

declaring how inexcusable you are upon these accounts! How will you be cut to the heart, when you shall see him approving the sentence of condemnation, which the Judge shall pronounce against you, and judging and sentencing you with Christ, as an assessor in judgment; for the saints shall judge the world, (1 Cor. vi. 2.) and when you shall see him rejoicing in the execution of justice upon you for all your unprofitableness under his ministry!

3. Consider what a happy opportunity you have in your hands now. Now your case is very different from the case of wicked men in another world, of which you have now heard; and particularly in the following respects.

(1.) God makes it the duty of *all the godly* now to be concerned for your salvation. As to those who are damned in hell, the saints in glory are not concerned for their welfare, and have no love nor pity towards them; and if you perish hereafter, it will be an occasion of joy to all the godly. But now God makes it the duty of all the godly, to love you with a sincere goodwill and earnest affection. God doth not excuse men from loving you, for your ill qualities: though you are wicked and undeserving, yet God makes it the duty of all sincerely to wish well to you; and it is a heinous sin in the sight of God, for any to hate you. He requires all to be concerned for your salvation, and by all means to seek it. It is their duty now to lament your danger, and to pray for mercy to you, that you may be converted and brought home to Christ.

Now the godly who know you, desire your salvation, and are ready to seek, and pray for it. If you be now in distress about the condition of your souls, you are not in such a forsaken, helpless condition, as those that are damned; but you may find many to pray for you, many who are willing to assist you by their advice and counsels, and all with a tender concern, and with hearty wishes that your souls may prosper. Now some of you have godly friends who are near and dear to you; you are beloved of those who have a great interest in heaven, and who have power with God by their prayers: you have the blessing of living under the same roof with them. Some of you have godly parents to pray for you, and to counsel and instruct you, who you may be sure will do it with sincere love and concern for you. And there is not only the command of God, God hath not only made it the duty of others to seek your salvation, but hath given encouragement to others to seek it. He gives encouragement that they may obtain help for you by their prayers, and that they may be instrumental of your spiritual good. God reveals it to be his manner, to make our sincere endeavours a mean of each other's good. How different is the case with you from what it is with those that are already

damned! And how happy an opportunity have you in your hands, if you would but improve it!

(2.) Now you live where there is *a certain order of men* appointed to make it the business of their lives to seek your salvation. Now you have ministers, not to rise up in judgment against you; but in Christ's stead, to beseech you to be reconciled to God; 2 Cor. v. 20. God hath not only made it the duty of all to wish well to your souls, and occasionally to endeavour to promote your spiritual interests, but he hath set apart certain persons, to make it their whole work, in which they should spend their days and their strength.

(3.) *Christ himself* is now seeking your salvation. He seeks it by the fore-mentioned means, by appointing men to make it their business to seek it; he seeks it by them; they are his instruments, and they beseech you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. He seeks it, in commanding your neighbours to seek it. Christ is represented in scripture, as wooing the souls of sinners. He uses means to persuade them to choose and accept of their own salvation. He often invites them to come to him that they may have life, that they may find rest to their souls, to come and take of the water of life freely. He stands at the door and knocks; and ceases not, though sinners for a long time refuse him. He bears repeated repulses from them, and yet mercifully continues knocking, saying, "Open to me, that I may come in and sup with you, and you with me." At the doors of many sinners he stands thus knocking for many years together. Christ is become a most importunate suitor to sinners, that he may become their sovereign. He is often setting before them the need they have of him, the miserable condition in which they are, and the great provision that is made for the good of their souls; and he invites them to accept of this provision, and promises it shall be theirs upon their mere acceptance.

Thus how earnestly did Christ seek the salvation of Jerusalem, and he wept over it when they refused; Luke xix. 41, 42. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." And Matt. xxiii. 37. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Thus Christ is now seeking your salvation; such an opportunity have you now in your hands? Consider therefore how many means Christ is using with you, to bring you to salvation.

Besides those things which have been now mentioned, some of you have a degree of the inward strivings and influences of

the Spirit, which makes your opportunity much greater. You have Christ's internal calls and knockings. All the persons of the Trinity are now seeking your salvation. God the Father hath sent his Son, who hath made way for your salvation, and removed all difficulties, except those which are with your own heart. And he is waiting to be gracious to you; the door of his mercy stands open to you; he hath set a fountain open for you to wash in from sin and uncleanness. Christ is calling, inviting, and wooing you; and the Holy Ghost is striving with you by his internal motions and influences.

4. If you now repent, before it be too late, the *saints and angels* in glory will rejoice at your repentance. If you repent not till it is too late, they will, as you have heard, rejoice in seeing justice executed upon you. But if you now repent, they will rejoice at your welfare, that you who were lost, are found; that you who were dead, are alive again. They will rejoice that you are come to so happy a state already, and that you are in due time to inherit eternal happiness. Luke xv. 3—10. So that if now you will improve your opportunity, there will be a very different occasion of joy in heaven concerning you, than that of which the doctrine speaks; not a rejoicing on occasion of your misery, but on occasion of your unspeakable blessedness.

5. If you repent before it is too late, *you yourselves* shall be of that joyful company. They will be so far from rejoicing on occasion of your ruin, that you yourselves will be of that glorious company, who will rejoice in all the works of God, who will have all tears wiped away from their eyes, to whom there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, and from whom sorrow and sighing shall flee away. You yourselves will be of those who will rejoice at the glorious display of God's majesty and justice, in his wrath on his enemies. You will be of those that shall sing for joy of heart at the day of judgment, while others mourn for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit; and you will enter into the joy of your Lord, and there shall *never be any end or abatement of your joy!*

SERMON XIV.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF TIME, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF REDEEMING IT.

Eph. v. 16.

Redeeming the time.

Christians should not only study to improve the opportunities they enjoy, for their *own* advantage, as those who would make a good bargain; but also labour to reclaim *others* from their evil courses; that so God might defer his anger, and time might be redeemed from that terrible destruction which, when it should come, would put an end to the time of divine patience. And it may be upon this account, that this reason is added, *Because the days are evil.* As if the apostle had said, the corruption of the times tends to hasten threatened judgments; but your holy and circumspect walk will tend to redeem time from the devouring jaws of those calamities. —However, thus much is certainly held forth to us in the words, *viz.* That upon time we should set a high value, and be exceeding careful that it be not lost; and we are therefore exhorted to exercise wisdom and circumspection, in order that we may redeem it. And hence it appears, that *Time is exceedingly precious.*

SECT. I.

Why time is precious.

Time is precious for the following reasons.

1. Because a happy or miserable eternity depends on the good or ill improvement of it. Things are precious in proportion to their importance, or to the degree wherein they concern

our welfare. Men are wont to set the highest value on those things upon which they are sensible their interest chiefly depends. And this renders time so exceedingly precious, because our eternal welfare depends on the improvement of it.—Indeed our welfare in *this* world depends upon its improvement. If we improve it not, we shall be in danger of coming to poverty and disgrace; but by a good improvement of it, we may obtain those things which will be useful and comfortable. But it is above all things precious, as our state through eternity depends upon it. The importance of the improvement of time upon other accounts, is in subordination to this.

Gold and silver are esteemed precious by men; but they are of no worth to any man, only as thereby he has an opportunity of avoiding or removing some evil or of possessing himself of some good. And the greater the evil is which any man hath advantage to escape, or the good which he hath advantage to obtain, by any thing that he possesses, by so much the greater is the value of that thing to him, whatever it be. Thus if a man, by any thing which he hath, may save his life, which he must lose without it, he will look upon that by which he hath the opportunity of escaping so great an evil as death, to be very precious.—Hence it is that time is so exceedingly precious, because by it we have opportunity of escaping everlasting misery and of obtaining everlasting blessedness and glory. On this depends our escape from an infinite evil, and our attainment of an infinite good.

2. Time is very short, which is another thing that renders it very precious. The scarcity of any commodity occasions men to set a higher value upon it, especially if it be necessary and they cannot do without it. Thus when Samaria was besieged by the Syrians, and provisions were exceedingly scarce, "an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver." 2 Kings vi. 25. So time is the more to be prized by men, because a whole eternity depends upon it; and yet we have but a little of time. "When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return." Job xvi. 22. "My days are swifter than a post. They are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hasteth to the prey." Job ix. 25, 26. "Our life; what is it? it is but a vapour which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Jam. iv. 14. It is but as a moment to eternity. Time is so short, and the work which we have to do in it is so great, that we have none of it to spare. The work which we have to do to prepare for eternity, must be done in time, or it never can be done; and it is found to be a work of great difficulty and labour. and therefore that for which time is the more requisite.

3. Time ought to be esteemed by us very precious because we are uncertain of its continuance. We know that it is very short, but we know not how short. We know not how little of it remains, whether a year or several years, or only a month, a week, or a day. We are every day uncertain whether that day will not be the last, or whether we are to have the whole day. There is nothing that experience doth more verify than this.—If a man had but little provision laid up for a journey or a voyage, and at the same time knew that if his provision should fail, he must perish by the way, he would be the more choice of it.—How much more would many men prize their time, if they knew that they had but a few months, or a few days more to live? And certainly a wise man will prize his time the more, as he knows not but that it will be so as to himself. This is the case with multitudes now in the world, who at present enjoy health, and see no signs of approaching death: many such, no doubt, are to die the next month, many the next week, yea, many probably to-morrow, and some this night; yet these same persons know nothing of it, and perhaps think nothing of it, and neither they nor their neighbours can say that they are more likely soon to be taken out of the world than others. This teaches us how we ought to prize our time, and how careful we ought to be, that we lose none of it.

4. Time is very precious, because when it is past, it cannot be recovered. There are many things which men possess, which if they part with, they can obtain them again. If a man have parted with something which he had, not knowing the worth of it, or the need he should have of it; he often can regain it, at least with pains and cost. If a man have been overseen in a bargain, and have bartered away or sold something, and afterwards repent of it, he may often obtain a release and recover what he had parted with.—But it is not so with respect to time; when once that is gone, it is gone for ever; no pains, no cost will recover it. Though we repent ever so much that we let it pass, and did not improve it while we had it, it will be to no purpose. Every part of it is successively offered to us, that we may choose, whether we will make it our own, or not. But there is no delay; it will not wait upon us to see whether or no we will comply with the offer. But if we refuse it is immediately taken away, and never offered more. As to that part of time which is gone, however we have neglected to improve it, it is out of our possession and out of our reach.

If we have lived fifty, or sixty, or seventy years, and have not improved our time, now it cannot be helped; it is eternally gone from us: all that we can do, is to improve the

little that remains. Yea, if a man have spent all his life but a few moments unimproved, all that is gone is lost, and only those few remaining moments can possibly be made his own; and if the whole of a man's time be gone, and it be all lost, it is irrecoverable.—Eternity depends on the improvement of time! but when once the time of life is gone, when once death is come, we have no more to do with time; there is no possibility of obtaining the restoration of it, or another space in which to prepare for eternity. If a man should lose the whole of his worldly substance, and become a bankrupt, it is possible that his loss may be made up. He may have another estate as good. But when the time of life is gone, it is impossible that we should ever obtain another such time. All opportunity of obtaining eternal welfare is utterly and everlastingly gone.

SECT. II.

Reflections on Time past.

You have now heard of the preciousness of time; and you are the persons concerned, to whom God hath committed that precious talent. You have an eternity before you. When God created you, and gave you reasonable souls, he made you for an endless duration. He gave you time here, in order to a preparation for eternity, and your future eternity depends on the improvement of time.—Consider, therefore, what you have done with your *past* time. You are not now beginning your time, but a great deal is past and gone; and all the wit, and power, and treasure of the universe, cannot recover it. Many of you may well conclude, that more than half of your time is gone; though you should live to the ordinary age of man, your glass is more than half run; and it may be there are but few sands remaining. Your sun is past the meridian, and perhaps just setting, or going into an everlasting eclipse. Consider, therefore, what account you can give of your improvement of past time. How have you let the precious golden sands of your glass run?

Every *day* that you have enjoyed has been precious; yea, your *moments* have been precious. But have you not wasted your precious moments, your precious days, yea, your precious years? If you should reckon up how many days you have lived, what a sum would there be! and how precious hath every one of those days been! Consider, therefore, what you have done with them. What is become of them all? What can you show of any improvement made, or good done, or benefit obtained, answerable to all this time which you have lived?

When you look back, and search, do you not find this past time of your lives in a great measure empty, having not been filled up with any good improvement? And if God, that hath given you your time, should now call you to an account, what account could you give to him.

How much may be done in a year! how much good is there opportunity to do in such a space of time! How much service may persons do for God, and how much for their own souls, if to their utmost they improve it! How much may be done in a day! But what have you done in so many days and years that you have lived? What have you done with the whole time of your youth, you that are past your youth? What is become of all that precious season of life? Hath it not all been vain to you? Would it not have been as well or better for you, if all that time you had been asleep, or in a state of non-existence?

You have had much time of leisure and freedom from worldly business; consider to what purpose you have spent it. You have not only had ordinary time, but you have had a great deal of holy time. What have you done with all the Sabbath-days which you have enjoyed? Consider those things seriously, and let your own consciences make answer.

SECT. III.

Who are chiefly deserving of reproof from the subject of the preciousness of time.

How little is the preciousness of time considered, and how little sense of it do the greater part of mankind seem to have! and to how little good purpose do many spend their time! There is nothing more precious, and yet nothing of which men are more prodigal. Time is with many, as silver was in the days of Solomon, *as the stones of the street, and nothing accounted of.* They act as if time were as plenty as silver was then, and as if they had a great deal more than they needed, and knew not what to do with it. If men were as lavish of their money as they are of their time; if it were as common a thing for them to throw away their money, as it is for them to throw away their time, we should think them beside themselves, and not in the possession of their right minds. Yet time is a thousand times more precious than money; and when it is gone, cannot be *purchased for money*, cannot be redeemed by silver or gold.—There are several sorts of persons who are reproved by this doctrine, whom I shall particularly mention.

1. Those who spend a great part of their time in *idleness*, or in doing nothing that turns to any account, either for the good of their souls or bodies; nothing either for their own benefit, or for the benefit of their neighbour, either of the family or of the body-politic to which they belong. There are some persons upon whose hands time seems to lie heavy, who, instead of being concerned, to improve it as it passes, and taking care that it pass not without making it their own, act as if it were rather their concern to contrive ways how to waste and consume it; as though time, instead of being precious, were rather a mere incumbrance to them. Their hands refuse to labour, and rather than put themselves to it, they will let their families suffer, and will suffer themselves: Prov. xix. 15. "An idle soul shall suffer hunger." Prov. xxii. 21. "Drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags."

Some spend much of their time at the tavern, over their cups, and in wandering about from house to house, wasting away their hours in idle and unprofitable talk which will turn to no good account: Prov. xiv. 23. "In all labour there is profit; but the talk of the lips tendeth only to poverty." The direction of the apostle, in Eph. iv. 28, is, that we should "labour, working with our hands the thing that is good, that we may have to give to him that needeth." But indolent men, instead of gaining any thing to give to him that needeth, do but waste what they have already: Prov. xviii. 9. "He that is slothful in his work, is brother to him that is a great waster."

2. They are reproved by this doctrine who spend their time in *wickedness*, who do not merely spend their time in doing nothing to any good purpose, but spend it to ill purposes. Such do not only lose their time, but they do worse; with it they hurt both themselves and others.—Time is precious, as we have heard, because eternity depends upon it. By the improvement of time, we have opportunity of escaping eternal misery, and obtaining eternal blessedness. But those who spend their time in wicked works, not only neglect to improve their time to obtain eternal happiness, or to escape damnation, but they spend it to a quite contrary purpose, *viz.* to increase their eternal misery, or to render their damnation the more heavy and intolerable.

Some spend much time in revelling, and in unclean talk and practices, in vicious company-keeping, in corrupting and ensnaring the minds of others, setting bad examples, and leading others into sin, undoing not only their own souls, but the souls of others. Some spend much of their precious time in detraction and backbiting; in talking against others; in contention, not only quarrelling themselves, but fomenting and stirring up strife and contention. It would have been well for

some men, and well for their neighbours, if they had never done any thing at all; for then they would have done neither good nor hurt. But now they have done a great deal more hurt than they have done or ever will do good. There are some persons whom it would have been better for the towns where they live, to have been at the charge of maintaining them in doing nothing, if that would have kept them in a state of inactivity.

Those who have spent much of their time in wickedness, if ever they shall reform, and enter upon a different mode of living, will find, not only that they have wasted the past, but that they have made work for their remaining time, to undo what they have done. How will many men, when they shall have done with time, and shall look back upon their past lives, wish that they had had no time! The time which they spend on earth will be worse to them than if they had spent so much time in hell; for an eternity of more dreadful misery in hell will be the fruit of their time on earth, as they employ it.

3. Those are reproved by this doctrine, who spend their time only in *worldly* pursuits, neglecting their souls. Such men lose their time, let them be ever so diligent in their worldly business; and though they may be careful not to let any of it pass so, but that it shall, some way or other, turn to their worldly profit. They that improve time only for their benefit in time, lose it; because time was not given for itself, but for that everlasting duration which succeeds it.—They, therefore, whose time is taking up in caring and labouring for the world only, in inquiring what they shall eat, and what they shall drink and wherewithal they shall be clothed; in contriving to lay up for themselves treasures upon earth, how to enrich themselves, how to make themselves great in the world, or how to live in comfortable and pleasant circumstances, while here: who busy their minds and employ their strength in these things only, and the stream of whose affections is directed towards these things; they lose their precious time.

Let such therefore, as have been guilty of thus spending their time, consider it. You have spent a great part of your time, and a great part of your strength, in getting a little of the world; and how little good doth it afford you, now you have gotten it! What happiness or satisfaction can you reap from it? will it give you peace of conscience, or any rational quietness or comfort? What is your poor, needy perishing soul the better for it? and what better prospects doth it afford you of your approrching eternity? and what will all that you have acquired avail you when time shall be no longer.

SECT. IV.

An Exhortation to improve Time.

Consider what hath been said of the preciousness of time, how much depends upon it, how short and uncertain it is, how irrecoverable will it be when gone. If you have a right conception of these things, you will be more choice of your time than of the most fine gold. Every hour and moment will seem precious to you.—But besides those considerations which have been already set before you, consider also the following.

1. That you are accountable to God for your time. Time is a talent given us by God; he hath set us our day; and it is not for nothing, our day was appointed for some work; therefore he will, at the day's end, call us to an account. We must give account to him of the improvement of all our time. We are God's servants; as a servant is accountable to his master, how he spends his time when he is sent forth to work, so are we accountable to God. If men would aright consider this, and keep it in mind, would they not improve their time otherwise than they do? Would you not behave otherwise than you do, if you considered with yourselves every morning that you must give an account to God, how you shall have spent that day? and if you considered with yourselves, at the beginning of every evening, that you must give an account to God, how you shall have spent that evening? Christ hath told us, that "for every idle word which men speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment," Matt. xii. 36. How well, therefore, may we conclude, that we must give an account of all our idle mis-spent time.

2. Consider how much time you have lost already. For your having lost so much, you have the greater need of diligently improving what yet remains. You ought to mourn and lament over your lost time; but that is not all, you must apply yourselves the more diligently to improve the remaining part, that you may redeem lost time.—You who are considerably advanced in life, and have hitherto spent your time in vanities and worldly cares, and have lived in a great measure negligent of the interests of your souls, may well be terrified and amazed, when you think how much time you have lost and wasted away.—In that you have lost so much time, you have the more need of diligence, on three accounts.

(1.) As your opportunity is so much the shorter.—Your time at its whole length is short. But set aside all that you have already lost, and then how much shorter is it! As to that part of your time which you have already lost, it is not

to be reckoned into your opportunity; for that will never be any more; and it is no better, but worse to you, than if it never had been.

(2.) You have the same work to do that you had at first, and that under greater difficulties. Hitherto you have done nothing at all of your work, all remains to be done, and that with vastly greater difficulties and opposition in your way than would have been if you had set about it seasonably. So that the time in which to do your work is not only grown shorter, but your work is grown greater. You not only have the *same* work to do, but you have *more* work; for while you have lost your time, you have not only shortened it, but you have been making work for yourselves. How well may this consideration awaken you to a thorough care, not to let things run on in this manner any longer, and rouse you up immediately to apply yourselves to your work with all your might?

(3.) That is the best of your time which you have lost. The first of a man's time, after he comes to the exercise of his reason, and to be capable of performing his work, is the best. You have lived in sin till past your youth, have lost the best part. So that here are all these things to be considered together, *viz.* that your time in the whole is but short, there is none to spare; a great part of that is gone, so that it is become much shorter; that which is gone is the best; yet all your work remains: and not only so, but with greater difficulties than ever before attended it; and the shorter your time is, the more work you have to do.

What will make you sensible of the necessity of a diligent improvement of remaining time, if these things will not? Sometimes such considerations as these have another effect, *viz.* to discourage persons, and to make them think, that seeing they have lost so much time, it is not worth their while to attempt to do any thing now. The devil makes fools of them; for when they are young, he tells them, there is time enough hereafter, there is no need of being in haste, it will be better seeking salvation hereafter, and then they believe him. Afterwards when their youth is past, he tells them, that now they have lost so much, and the best of their time, that it is not worth their while to attempt to do any thing; and now they believe him too. So that with them no time is good. The season of youth is not a good time; for that is most fit for pleasure and mirth, and there will be enough afterwards; and what comes afterwards is not a good time, because the best of it is gone. Thus are men infatuated and ruined.

But what madness is it for persons to give way to discouragement, so as to neglect their work, because their time is short! What need have they rather to awake out of sleep, thoroughly to rouse up themselves, and to be in good earnest,

that if possible they may yet obtain eternal life! Peradventure, God may yet give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, that they may be saved. Though it be late in the day, yet God calls upon you to rouse, and to apply yourselves to your work; and will you not hearken to *his* counsel in this great affair, rather than to the counsel of your mortal enemy?

3. Consider how time is sometimes valued by those who are come near to the end of it. What a sense of its preciousness have poor sinners sometimes, when they are on their death-beds! Such have cried out, *O, a thousand worlds for an inch of time!* Then time appears to them indeed precious. An inch of time could do them no more good than before, when they were in health, supposing a like disposition to improve it, nor indeed so much: for a man's time upon a death-bed is attended with far greater disadvantage for such an improvement as will be for the good of his soul, than when he is in health. But the near approach of death makes men sensible of the inestimable worth of time. Perhaps, when they were in health, they were as insensible of its value as you are, and were as negligent of it. But how are their thoughts altered now! It is not because they are deceived, that they think time to be of such value, but because their eyes are opened; and it is because you are deceived and blind, that you do not think as they do.

4. Consider what a value we may conclude is set upon time by those who are past the end of it. What thoughts do you think they have of its preciousness, who have lost all their opportunity for obtaining eternal life, and are gone to hell? Though they were very lavish of their time while they lived, and set no great value upon it, yet how have they changed their judgments! How would they value the opportunity which *you* have, if they might but have it granted to *them?* What would they not give for one of your days, under the means of grace!—So will you, first or last, be convinced. But if you be not convinced except in the manner in which they are, it will be too late.

There are two ways of making men sensible of the preciousness of time. One is, by showing them the reason why it must be precious, by telling them how much depends on it, how short it is, how uncertain, &c. The other is experience, wherein men are convinced how much depends on the improvement of time. The latter is the most effectual way; for that always convinces, if nothing else doth.—But if persons be not convinced by the former means, the latter will do them no good. If the former be ineffectual, the latter, though it be certain, yet is always too late. Experience never fails to open the eyes of men, though they were never opened before. But if they

be first opened by that, it is no way to their benefit. Let all therefore be persuaded to improve their time to their utmost.

SECT. V.

Advice respecting the improvement of Time.

I shall conclude with advising to three things in particular:—

1. Improve the *present* time without any delay. If you delay and put off its improvement, still more time will be lost; and it will be an evidence that you are not sensible of its preciousness. Talk not of more convenient seasons hereafter; but improve your time while you have it, after the example of the Psalmist, Psalm cxix. 60. "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments."

2. Be especially careful to improve *those parts* of time which are most precious. Though all time is very precious, yet some parts are more precious than others; as particularly, holy time is more precious than common time. Such time is of great advantage for our everlasting welfare; therefore, above all, improve your Sabbaths, and especially the time of public worship, which is the most precious part. Lose it not either in sleep, or in carelessness, inattention, and wandering imaginations. How sottish are they who waste away not only their common, but holy time, yea, the very season of attendance on the holy ordinances of God!—The time of youth is precious, on many accounts. Therefore, if you be in the enjoyment of this time, take heed that you improve it. Let not the precious days and years of youth slip away without improvement. A time of the strivings of God's spirit is more precious than other time. Then God is near; and we are directed, in Isa. lv. 6, "To seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near." Such especially is an accepted time, and a day of salvation: 2 Cor. vi. 2. "I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in a day of salvation have I succoured thee, behold now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

3. Improve well your time of *leisure* from worldly business. Many persons have a great deal of such time, and all have some. If men be but disposed to it, such time may be improved to great advantage. When we are most free from cares for the body and business of an outward nature, a happy opportunity for the soul is afforded. Therefore spend not such opportunities unprofitably, nor in such a manner that you will not be able to give a good account thereof to God. Waste them not away wholly in unprofitable visits, or useless diversions or

amusements. Diversion should be used only in subserviency to business. So much, and no more should be used, as doth most fit the mind and body for the work of our general and particular callings.

You have need to improve every talent, advantage, and opportunity, to your utmost, while time lasts; for it will soon be said concerning you, according to the oath of the angel, in Rev. x. 5, 6, "And the angel which I saw, stood upon the sea and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth and the things that therein are, and the sea and the things which are therein, *That there should be time no longer.*"

SERMON XV.

PROCRASTINATION; OR THE SIN AND FOLLY OF DEPENDING ON FUTURE TIME.

Prov. xxvii. 1.

Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

The design of the wise man, in this book of Proverbs is, to give us the precepts of true wisdom, or to teach us how to conduct ourselves wisely in the course of our lives. Wisdom very much consists in making a wise improvement of time, and of the opportunities we enjoy. This is often in scripture spoken of as a great part of true wisdom; as Deut. xxxii. 29. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" And Psalm xc. 12. 'So, teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." So the wisdom of the wise virgins is represented as consisting much in this, that they improved the proper season to buy oil.

Therefore the wise man, in these books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, agreeably to his design, insists on this part of wisdom. He tells us the advantage of seeking Christ early; Prov. viii. 17. And advises us *to do what our hand findeth to do, with our might;* Eccles. ix. 10. He advises young people to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, while the evil days come not, in which they shall say they have no pleasure; Eccles. xii. 1. So here he advises us to a wise improvement of the present season.—In the words are two things to be particularly observed.

1. The precept, *not to boast of to-morrow;* i. e. not to speak or act as though it were our own. It is absurd for men

to boast of that which is not theirs. The wise man would not have us behave ourselves as though any time were ours, but the present. He that boasts of to-morrow, acts as though he had to-morrow in his possession, or had something whereby he might depend on it, and call it his own.

2. The reason given for this precept; *for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.* It is a good reason why we should not behave ourselves as though the morrow were our own, that indeed it is not; we are not sure of it; we have no hold of future time; we know not whether we shall see the morrow: or if we do know that we shall see it, we know not what we shall see on it.—Hence, we ought to behave ourselves every day, as though we had no dependence on any other.

SECT. I.

Needful Precautions.

To prevent a misunderstanding of the doctrine, I observe, that it is not meant, that we should in every respect behave as though we knew that we should not live another day. Not depending on another day, is a different thing from concluding, that we shall not live another day. We may have reason for the one, and not for the other. We have good reason not to depend on another day, but we have no reason to conclude, that we shall not live another day.

In some respects we ought to carry ourselves as though we knew we should not live another day, and should improve every day as if it were the last. Particularly, we should live every day as conscientiously and as holily as if we knew it were the last. We should be as careful every day to avoid all sin, as if we knew that that night our souls should be required of us. We should be as careful to do every duty which God requires of us, and take as much care that we have a good account to give to our Judge, of our improvement of that day, as if we concluded that we must be called to give an account before another day.

But in many other respects, we are not obliged to behave ourselves as though we concluded that we should not live to another day. If we had reason to conclude that we should not live another day, some things would not be our duty which now are our duty. As for instance, in such a case it would not be the duty of any person to make provision for his temporal subsistence during another day: to neglect which as things now are, would be very imprudent and foolish, as the consequences would show, if every man were to act in this manner. If so, it would never be man's duty to plough or sow the field, or

to lay up for winter; but these things are man's duty; as Prov. vi. 6—8. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard: consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." And chap. x. 5, &c. "He that gathereth in the summer is a wise son; but he that sleepeth in the harvest, is a son that causeth shame." And many other places might be mentioned.

So,on the other hand, if we were certain that we should not live another day, some things would be our duty to-day, which now are not so. As for instance, it would be proper for us to spend our time in giving our dying counsels, and in setting our houses in order. If it were revealed to us, that we should die before to-morrow morning, we ought to look upon it as a call of God to us, to spend the short remainder of our lives in those things which immediately concern our departure, more than otherwise it would be our duty to do.—Therefore the words which forbid us to boast of to-morrow, cannot be extended so far as to signify, that we ought *in all respects* to live, as if we knew we should not see another day. Yet they undoubtedly mean, that we ought not to behave ourselves in any respect, as though we depended on another day.

SECT. II.

The Precept explained.

Boast not thyself of to-morrow. In this precept two things seem to be forbidden.

1. Boasting ourselves of what shall be on the morrow, or behaving ourselves as though we depended on particular things to come to pass in this world, in some future time. As when men behave themselves as though they depended on being rich, or promoted to honour hereafter; or as though they were sure of accomplishing any particular design another day. So did the rich man in the gospel, when he did not only promise himself, that he should live many years, but promised himself also, that he should be rich many years, Hence he said to his soul, that "he had much goods laid up for many years."

And if men act as though they depended upon it, that they should another day accomplish such and such things for their souls, then may they be said to boast themselves of to-morrow, and not to behave themselves as though they depended on no other day. As when they behave themselves, as though they depended upon it, that they should at another day have such and such advantages for the good of their souls:

that they should at another day have the strivings of God's spirit; that they should at another day find themselves disposed to be thorough in seeking their salvation; that they should at another day have a more convenient season; and that God at another day would stand ready to hear their prayers, and show them mercy.

Or if they act as though they depended upon it that they should have considerable opportunity on a death-bed to seek mercy; or whatever they promise themselves should come to pass respecting them in this world, if they act as depending on it, they boast themselves of to-morrow.

2. Another thing implied, is our boasting of future time itself, or acting as though we depended on it, that we should have our lives continued to us another day. Not only is the command of God delivered in the text transgressed by those who behave themselves as depending upon it, that they shall see and obtain such and such things to-morrow; but by those who act as depending upon it, that they shall remain in being in this world to-morrow.

Both these ways of boasting of to-morrow are reproved by the apostle James, chap. iv. 13. "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain." By promising themselves that they shall do such and such things, and that they shall get gain, they boast themselves of what shall come to pass in such a time. The apostle in the next verse teaches them, that they ought not to do this, no nor so much as depend upon seeing another day, or on having their lives continued, ver. 14. "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow: For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." And in ver. 15, he teaches us that both are uncertain and dependent on the will of God, *viz.* Whether we shall live another day, and if we do, whether such and such things shall come to pass. "For that you ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that." Therefore he adds in ver. 16, "But now you rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil."

SECT. III.

When men act as though they depend on another day.

1. They will do so, if they *set their hearts* on the enjoyments of this life. I mean not, if they have any manner of affection to them. We may have some affection to the enjoyments of this world: otherwise they would cease to be enjoyments. If we might have no degree of rejoicing in them.

we could not be thankful for them. Persons may in a degree take delight in earthly things, and other earthly enjoyments. It is agreeable to the wise man's advice that we should do so, Eccles. v. 18. "It is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all this labour that he taketh under the sun."—But by setting our hearts on these things, by placing our happiness on them, and letting out the current of our affections after them—by turning and fixing our inclinations so much upon them, that we cannot well enjoy ourselves without them, so that very much of the strength of the faculties of our minds is employed and taken up about these things—we show that we have our dependence on another day.

The man who doth thus, acts as though he depended on another day, yea many other days, in the world; for it is most evident, that if the enjoyments of this world be of such a nature that they are not to be depended on for one day more, they are not worth the setting of our hearts upon them, or the placing of our happiness in them. We may rejoice in the enjoyments of the world, but not in such a manner as to place the rest of our souls in them. As the apostle saith, we should rejoice in them as though we rejoiced not, 1 Cor. vii. 30. So that if this joy should fail, our stock may hold good: and in this case we must behave ourselves only as if we had lost a small stream of joy, but still had the fountain in full possession. We should conduct ourselves as those who have not the foundation of their joy shaken, though some appurtenances have failed. Our happiness as to *the body* of it, if I may so speak, should yet stand as on an immovable foundation.

They who are very much pleased and elated with the enjoyments of the world, certainly behave themselves as though they had much dependence on their continuance for more than one or two days more.—They who addict themselves to vain mirth, and lead a jovial life, show that they set their hearts on the enjoyments of the world, and act as those who depend on more days than the present. For if they were sensible that they could not depend on any future time, but that death would put an eternal end to all their carnal mirth before to-morrow, they would have no heart to spend the present day in such a manner as they now do. It would immediately produce in them a disposition far from levity and vanity.

And when persons are very much sunk with the loss of any temporal enjoyments, or with any temporal disappointments, it shows that they set their hearts upon them, and behave as though they boasted of to-morrow, and depended on their long continuance in life. If they had no such depen-

dence, they would not be frustrated, or would not be overwhelmed by their frustration. If they be very much sunk, and the comfort of their lives be destroyed by it, it shows that those temporal enjoyments were too much the foundation on which their comfort stood. That which makes a building totter, and threatens its destruction, is not the taking away of some of the exterior parts of the superstructure, but the removal of some considerable part of the foundation on which the house stands.

2. If men are proud of *their worldly circumstances*, it shows that they have a dependence on to-morrow; for no man would think it worth his while to vaunt himself in that which is to be depended on only for a day. Though a man have a great estate to-day, he will not be puffed up with it, unless he depend upon having it to-morrow. A man who hath no dependence, but that he may to-morrow be in the grave, where the small and great are upon a level, Job iii. 19, will not be much lifted up with his advancement to a post of honour.

That person will not be proud of his rich and fine clothes, who is sensible that he may be stripped by death to-morrow, and sent out of the world, as he came naked into it. He will not to-day be very proud of his personal beauty, who hath no dependence on escaping to-morrow that stroke of death which will mar all his beauty, and make that face which he now thinks so comely, appear ghastly and horrid; when instead of a ruddy and florid countenance, there will be the blood settled, cold and congealed, the flesh stiff and clayed, the teeth set, the eyes fixed and sunk into the head. Nor will he to-day very much affect to beautify and adorn with gaudy and flaunting apparel, that body concerning which he is sensible that it may be wrapped in a winding-sheet to-morrow, to be carried to the grave, there to rot, and be covered and filled with worms.

3. When men envy others their worldly enjoyments, their wealth, their worldly ease, or their titles and high places.—their sensual pleasures, or any of their worldly circumstances —it shows, that they set their hearts on the things of the world; and that they are not sensible that these things are not to be depended upon for another day. If they were, they would not think them worth their envy. They would appear so worthless in their eyes, that they would not care who had them, nor who went without them.—So when they contend about worldly possessions and enjoyments, (as almost all the contentions that are in the world are about these things,) it shows that they have dependence on to-morrow; otherwise they would not think the enjoyments of the world worth contending about. They would be very much of the temper

recommended by Jesus Christ, Matt. v. 40. "He that will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

4. Men behave themselves as if they depended on another day, when they rest at ease to-day, in a condition out of which they must be delivered before they die. When a man's mind is at rest, there is something that he rests in: it must have some foundation, either real or imaginary. But if the man be in a condition from which he is sensible he must some time or other be delivered, or be undone, it is impossible that he should rest in the thoughts of remaining in his condition always, and never being delivered from it: for no man is willing to be ruined; no man can rest in that which he conceives to be connected with his own misery and undoing.—Therefore, if he rests in such a condition for the present, it must be on a supposition, that he shall be delivered from it. If he rest in it to day, it must be because he depends on being delivered *another* day, and therefore depends on seeing another day.

We in this land generally profess, that as we are by nature sinful, we are exposed to eternal death, and that therefore there is a necessity that we get out of a natural condition some time before we die. And those among us who are sensible that they have never passed through any such change as in scripture is called a *being born again*, though they be not sufficiently convinced that there is any such place as hell, yet have a kind belief of it; at least they do not conclude, that there is no such place, and therefore cannot but be sensible that it would be dreadful to die unconverted. Therefore, if they be in a considerable degree of ease and quietness in their condition, it must be because they have a dependence on being delivered out of such a condition some time before they die.

In as much as they are easy, remaining in such a condition to-day, without any prospect of present deliverance, it shows plainly that they depend on another day. If they did not, they could have no quietness in their spirits; because, if there be no grounds of dependence on any further opportunity, then what they are exposed to, by missing the opportunity which they have to-day, is infinitely dreadful.—Persons who are secure in their sins, under the light of the gospel, unless they be deceived with a false hope, are generally so, because they boast themselves of to-morrow. They depend on future opportunity; they flatter themselves with hopes of living long in the world; they depend on what shall come to pass hereafter; they depend on the fulfilment of their good intentions as to what they will do at a more convenient season.

5. Men behave themselves as those who depend on another day, when they neglect any thing to-day which must be done before they die. If there be any thing which is absolutely

necessary to be done some time before death, and the necessity of it be sufficiently declared and shown to the person for whom it is thus necessary; if he neglect setting about it immediately, sincerely, and with all his might, certainly it carries this face with it, that the man depends upon its being done hereafter, and consequently that he shall have opportunity to do it.—Because, as to those things which are absolutely necessary to be done, there is need, not only of a possibility of a future opportunity; but of something which is to be depended on, some good ground to conclude that we shall have future opportunity; therefore, whoever lives under the gospel, and does not this day thoroughly reform his life, by casting away every abomination, and denying every lust—and doth not apply himself to the practice of the whole of his duty towards God and man, and begin to make religion his main business—he acts as one who depends on another day; because he is abundantly taught that these things must be done before he dies.

Those who have been seeking salvation for a great while, in a dull, insincere, and slightly manner, and find no good effect of it, have abundant reason to conclude, that some time before they die, they must not only seek, but strive to enter in at the strait gate, and must be violent for the kingdom of heaven: and therefore, if they do not begin thus to-day, they act as those who depend on another day. So those who have hitherto lived in the neglect of some particular known duty, whether it be secret prayer, or paying some old debt, which they have long owed to their neighbour—or the duty of confessing some fault to a brother who hath aught against them, or of making restitution for some injury—they act as those who depend on another day.

6. Men behave themselves as though they depended on another day, if they do that to-day which some time or other must be undone. There are many things done by men which must be undone by them. They must go back again from the way which they have gone, or they are ruined to all eternity. Therefore, in doing these things, they act as those who depend on future opportunity to undo them: As when a man cheats or defrauds his neighbour in any thing, he acts as one that boasts of to-morrow: for he must undo what he doth before he dies; he must some time or other make restitution, or divine justice, which oversees all things, and governs the whole world, and will see to it that right be done, will not let go its hold of him.

So when men hearken to temptation, and yield to the solicitations of their lusts to commit any sin, they act as those who depend on another day. They do what must be undone. What they then do must be undone by hearty and thorough

repentance or they are ruined and lost for ever. So if persons have been seeking salvation for a time, and afterwards are guilty of backsliding, and turn back after their hands have been put to the plough, they act as those who depend on another day. For what they now do, they must undo some time or other; they must go back again from their backsliding, and have all their work to do over again. And these things must be undone in this world, while men live; for there will be no undoing of them afterwards; they may be suffered for, but never can be undone.

SECT. IV.

Why we ought not to boast of To-morrow.

I come now to show, why we ought not thus to boast ourselves of to-morrow; but on the contrary, to behave ourselves every day as though we had no dependence on another. And there is this plain and sufficient REASON for it, *viz.* That we have no grounds of dependence on another day. We have neither any foundation to depend upon seeing any particular things come to pass another day, which we may hope or wish for, nor upon enjoying another day in this world. We have nothing for a foundation of dependence that we shall not be in eternity before to-morrow, as both reason and experience show. We have no promise of God that we shall ever see another day. We are in God's hands; our lives are in his hands; he hath set our bounds; the number of our months and days are with him; nor hath he told them to us. We see that the life of man at longest is very short, and nothing is more uncertain; and it is a thing universal among mankind, that they know not the day of their death. We see that great natural abilities, and sharpness of wit, and clearness of discernment, do not help to any discovery in this matter. Wise men are as uncertain of the term of their lives as others.

There are so many ways and means whereby the lives of men come to an end, that no circumstances in which a man can be are any security to him from death. That it is but a very little while till to-morrow, is no good ground of dependence that we shall live till then. We see that deaths as sudden as our dying before to-morrow morning, are common in the world. We very often see or hear of sudden deaths. How many suddenly in a few minutes, pass from a state of health to a state of death, in the day-time, by several kinds of disease, which give no warning of their approach, and by many unforeseen accidents! How many go to sleep, in health,

and are found dead in their beds in the morning! So that our present health is no good ground of dependence that we shall live to see another day.—That persons are now in youth, is no good ground of dependence upon another day: for sudden unexpected deaths are common even among those who are in the bloom of youth. Nor is it any ground of dependence in this case, that a man is of a more than ordinary healthy and strong constitution. It is found by experience, that such are liable to sudden death as well as others: Job xxi. 23. "One dieth in his full strength. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow."

That persons have already lived to see a great many days, and that after they had been often in times past told that they were uncertain of any future time; or that persons have a strong desire to live longer: or that they are now very unprepared for death, both on temporal and spiritual accounts; is no ground of dependence on the future. Death tarries for no man, but comes when and to whom he is sent, and strikes the deadly blow, whether the man be prepared or not. That men have been very useful in their day, and that it is of great importance to their families and neighbours that they should live longer, is no ground of dependence. The most useful men are often cut down by death, in the midst of their usefulness. The same may be said, though we cannot see which way death should come at us before to-morrow. To how many accidents, to how many diseases are we liable which may prove fatal before to-morrow, which yet it is impossible for us to foresee! So if we be very careful of our lives, and our health, not to expose ourselves to any dangers, still this is no ground of dependence as to any future time. Death comes in many ways which were not thought of. Men foresee not the means of their death, any more than the fish securely swimming in the water foresee the net, or the bird that securely feeds upon the bait sees the snare. It is as the wise man observes, in Eccles. ix. 12. "For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them."

SECT. V.

Serious Inquiries.

I shall improve this doctrine, by putting you upon examining yourselves, whether you do not boast yourselves of to-morrow, or whether you do not live in such a manner as you would not, were it not that you depend on future time and future opportunity in the world. Would not your behaviour be very different from what it now is, if you every day lived and acted without any dependence on seeing one day more? You cannot but acknowledge it to be most reasonable, that you should live and act thus. You cannot but own, that you have no good ground of dependence on another day; and therefore that you cannot act wisely any otherwise than in acting as one who hath no dependence on any such thing. Therefore inquire whether you act wisely and reasonably in this respect.

1. Do you not set your hearts much more on this world, than you would, if you had no dependence on the morrow? Is not the language of the rich man in the gospel, the secret language of your hearts? "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years," &c. Is not this the language of your hearts, with respect to what you have gotten already; which makes you place your happiness so much in it? And with respect to what of the world you are seeking and pursuing, is it not with a dependence on enjoying it for a great while, when you shall have obtained it? Are not your lands and other possessions which you have gotten, or are about to get, in your own imagination, yours for a great while? Would your mind be so filled with thoughts and cares about these things, so much to the exclusion of another world? Would you lay yourselves under so great disadvantages for your soul's good, by involving yourselves in worldly cares; if you had no dependence on having any thing to do with these things for more than the present day? If you did not depend on considerable more time in the world, would your inquiry be so much, What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? and so little, How shall we make our calling and election sure; how shall we be assured that we are upon a good foundation for another world, and that we are in such a state, that death cannot hurt us? How shall we be sure that we are ready to appear before the judgment-seat of a heart searching God? Would there be so much of your time spent in laying up treasure on earth—and so little in laying up treasure in heaven that you might have store against the day of death—were it not that you put death at a distance? Would you be so much

raised at your temporal prosperity, and so much sunk when you meet with crosses and disappointments in your worldly affairs, if you did not think that continuance in the world is to be depended on for more days than the present? Let those who very much affect to adorn their bodies in gaudy apparel, inquire whether they would think it worth their while to spend so much time to make themselves fine, and to set themselves forth as gayer than others, if they really had no dependence that their bodies would be preserved one day longer from being clasped in the cold arms of death?

2. Inquire whether you would not much less meddle with the concerns of others, and be much more employed with your own hearts, if each day you had no dependence on living another day. If you were sensible that you had no other day to depend upon than this, you would be sensible that you had great affairs of your own to attend to. You would find a great deal of business at home between God and your own soul; and considering that you cannot depend on another day, it would seem to you that you have but a short time in which to do it, and that therefore you have need to be much engaged. You would say as Christ did, I must work while the day lasts, for the night cometh, wherein no man can work. You would find so much to be done, and so much difficulty in doing it, that you would have little leisure, and little heart to intermeddle with the business of others. Your business would be confined to a much narrower compass. You would have so much to do at home in your closets, and with your own hearts, that you would find no occasion to go abroad for intermeddling business to fill up your time.

But the truth is, men conceive of a great deal of time which they have to be filled up, and hence they want business: they depend on to-morrow, and the day following, and next month, and next year, yea many years to come. When they are young they depend on living to be middle-aged, and when middle-aged they depend on old age, and always put far away the day of death. Let them be young or old, there always seems to them to be a great vacancy between them and death; hence they wander to and fro for business to fill up that vacancy.—Whereas if they were sensible of the uncertainty of life they would, in the first place, make sure of their own business; the business of their own precious immortal souls would be done, before they would attend much to the business of other people. They would have no desire or disposition to concern themselves with every private quarrel which breaks out in the neighbourhood. They would not think it much concerned them to inquire into the matter, and to pass their censure on the affair. They would find something else to do, than to set by the hour together, discussing and censuring the conduct of

such and such persons, gathering up or rehearsing the stories which are carried about to the disadvantage of this and that person.

We seldom, if ever, see men who are upon sick-beds, and look upon themselves very dangerously sick, disposed to spend their time in this manner; and the reason is, that they look upon it doubtful, whether they shall live long. They do not so much as others, depend on much time to spare; hence their minds are taken up more about their own souls' concerns, than about the concerns of others. So it would be with persons in health, if their health did not make them depend on a great deal of time in the world.

3. If you each day depend on no other but the present, would you not engage and interest yourselves much less in party designs and schemes, than you are now wont to do? Among a people divided into two parties, as this town hath been for a long time, there is commonly much done by the partizans in forming schemes of opposition to one another. There is always a strife, who shall get their wills and carry their point. This often engages them, if not in open quarrels, in secret intrigues. That there is so much done in these things, is a certain evidence that they boast themselves of to-morrow, and put death at a distance.

Men would certainly find themselves very much indisposed to such things, if they were so sensible of the uncertainty of life, as to depend on no other day than the present. It is therefore very proper, that you should examine yourselves in this particular, at this time. If you really depended on no other day than the present, would your hearts be so much engaged in strife between two parties, as they often are? Would your spirits be so often raised and ruffled. Would you go about with so much prejudice against such and such men: harbouring so much of the old leaven, which so often breaks out in heats of spirit; and, as an old sore which was skinned over, but not cured, sets to raging, with a touch, which would not have hurt sound flesh? Commonly in the management of a strife between two parties, there is a great deal of envy. When any who belong to one of the parties seem to prosper, the other party will envy them; it is a grievous thing to them. So there is also much contempt; when one of the parties gets the ascendant a little over the other, they are ready to make the utmost improvement of it, and to insult the other party.—And there is commonly in such cases a great deal of mutual secret reproach. When those of one party get together, then is the time to inveigh against those of the other party, and to set forth their injustice and their fraudulent practices. Then is the time for them to pass their censure on their words and actions. Then is the time to expose their

own surmises and suspicions of what the other party intends, what it aims at in such and such things, what the purposes of individuals are, and what they suppose their secret actions are.—Then is the time for all that are friends in the cause, and engaged in the same designs, to entertain one another by ridiculing the words and actions of the other party, and to make themselves sport of their folly and disappointments; and much is done at calling one another *Raca* and *fools*, or other names equivalent, if not much more than equivalent. Then is the time to lay their heads together to plot and contrive how they shall manage such an affair so as to disappoint the other party, and obtain their own wills.

Brethren, these things ought not so to be among a Christian people; especially among a people that has made the profession which we have made. Nor would they be so if it were not for your dependence on much future time in the world. If you were so sensible of your continual liableness to death, that every day was the last you depended upon, these things certainly would not be so. For let us but consider what are the effects of death with respect to such things. It puts an end to party-quarrels. Many men hold these quarrels as long as they live. They begin young, and hold on through many great and sore afflictions and chastisements of Providence. The old sore remains, when the supporters of nature bow, and the eyes grow dim, and the hands tremble with age. But death, when that comes, puts an end to all their quarrelling in this world. Death silences the most clamorous, and censorious, and backbiting tongue. When men are dead, they cease to lay schemes against those of another party; death dashes all their schemes, so far as they have any concern in them. Psalm cxlvi. 4. "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."

When men are dead, they cease to bite and devour others; as it is said to have been of old a proverb among the Egyptians, "Dead men do not bite." There are many who will bite and devour as long as they live, but death tames them. Men could not be quiet or safe by them while alive, but none will be afraid of them when dead. The bodies of those that made such a noise and tumult when alive, when dead, lie as quietly among the graves of their neighbours as any others. Their enemies, of whom they strove to get their wills while alive, get their wills of them when they are dead. Nothing can please their enemies better than to have them out of their way. It suits them, that those who were so troublesome to them, are locked up safe in the close grave, where they will no more stand in their way.—There are no more effects of their pride, their craftiness, their hatred, and

envy. Eccles. ix. 6. "Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished."

The time will soon come, when you who have for many years been at times warmly contending one with another, will be very peaceable as to this world. Your dead bodies will probably lie quietly together in the same burying-place. If you do not leave off contending before death, how natural will it be for others to have such thoughts as these, when they see your corpses: What! is this the man who used to be so busy in carrying on the designs of his party? Oh, now, he has done; now he hath no more any part in any of these things; now it doth not at all concern him, who get their wills, or what party is uppermost. We shall hear his voice no more in our *town meetings*. He will not sit any more to reproach and laugh at others. He is gone to appear before his judge, and to receive according to his conduct in life.—The consideration of such things as these would certainly have a mighty effect among us, if we did not put far away the day of death. If all acted every day as not depending on any other day, we should be a peaceable, quiet people.

4. Inquire, whether or no you do not allow yourselves in some things, and endeavour to flatter yourselves that there is no evil in them, which you would by no means dare to do if you had not a dependence on living till to-morrow. It is very common among men, when they are strongly enticed to some sinful practice, by their worldly interest, or by their carnal appetites, to pretend that they do not think there is any evil in it; when indeed they know better. Their pretence is only to serve a present turn. And if they expected to have their souls required of them that night, they would by no means dare to persist in the practice. Therefore examine the liberties you take by this test. What would you think of them, if you now should have the following news sent you by some messenger from heaven: John, or Thomas, (or whatever your name be,) this night shall thy soul be required of thee. How would such tidings strike you! How would they alter the face of things! Doubtless your thoughts would be very quick; you would soon begin to reflect on yourselves, and to examine your past and present conduct. And in what colours would the liberties you now take, appear to you in the case now supposed? Would you then conclude, that there is no evil in them? Would you not be less bold to go forward and meet death, for having continued in such practices? Would you dare to commit such acts again before you die, which now you pretend are lawful? Would not the few hours which you would have to live, be at all the more uncomfortable to you for having done such things? Would you not presently wish that you had let them alone? Yea, would they not appear frightful and terrifying to you?

If it be thus, it is a sign that the reason why you now allow yourselves in them, and plead for their lawfulness, is, that you put death at a distance, and depend on many other days in the world.

5. Inquire, whether you do not some things on the presumption, that you shall hereafter repent of them. Is not this the very thing which causes you to dare to do some things? Is it not the very ground on which you venture to gratify your lusts? Let young people examine all their secret carriage; what they do alone in the dark and in secret corners. God knoweth, and your own hearts know, though men do not. Put the question impartially to your own consciences; is not this the very thing that gives you courage, that God is very merciful, and that he often of his sovereign mercy gives repentance of great sins, and even wilful sins, and in consequence of repentance forgives? And so you hope, that one day or other he will do so to you. You intend some time hereafter earnestly to seek; and you hope you shall be awakened. And if you be very earnest, as you intend to be, you hope you shall be converted, and then you shall be forgiven, and it will be as well as if you had never committed such sins.

If this be the case, consider how you boast of to-morrow, and foolishly depend on future opportunity to repent, as well as foolishly presume on the mercy of God to give you repentance, at the same time that you take a course to provoke God for ever to give you up to a sealed hardness and blindness, and to a most fearful damnation; not considering that God will glorify his revenging justice, as well as his mercy; nor remembering the sad example of Esau, "who for a morsel of meat sold his birth-right; and afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Heb. xii. 16, 17.

6. Inquire, whether you improve this day as one who doth not depend upon ever having opportunity to keep another Sabbath, or to hear or read another discourse. It appears from what hath been already said, that you have no grounds to depend on any more such opportunities. Now the day is present, and so you are in the better capacity to determine how it is with you. It is but for you to reflect upon yourselves, to look inward, and see how it is with you at this present time. And how is it? Are you as strict and as diligent in keeping this Sabbath, watching your thoughts, keeping your hearts, striving in duties both public and private, and improving ordinances, as might be expected of one who hath no dependence on ever enjoying such an opportunity any more; one who doth not depend on ever setting foot again within the walls of God's house? Do you attend to this address with that care, and desire, and endeavour to improve it for your good, as you would,

if you did not depend upon it, that your bodies would not be in the grave, and your souls fixed in eternity, in their unalterable state, before the next Sabbath?

7. Are you careful to see to it that the grounds of your hope are good? A man who hath some hope of being in a state of acceptance with God, but is not sure, if he had no dependence on any other day's opportunity of making it sure, would be very strict in examining himself, and searching the grounds of his hope, and would not rest in an uncertainty. He would be very thorough in informing himself what might be depended on as good evidence of an interest in Christ, and what not; and would be exceedingly strict in searching his own heart, to see whether there was any thing in him that comes up to the requisites laid down in the scriptures.—If what appears hopeful in him were dim and obscure, he would set himself very earnestly to obtain that which would be more clear and manifest, and would cry earnestly to God for it, and would apply himself to a diligent use of means in order to it. And good reason why; for he depends on no other opportunity to make his calling and election sure, than what he hath to-day. Inquire, therefore, whether you be thus thorough in examining your hope. And are you thus careful effectually to see to it, that you are on a sure foundation? If not, then you behave yourselves as those that depend on to-morrow.

SECT. VI.

How to spend every day.

God hath concealed from us the day of our death, without doubt, partly for this end, that we might be excited to be always ready, and might live as those that are always waiting for the coming of their Lord, agreeably to the counsel which Christ gives us, Matt. xxiv. 42, 43, 44; xxv. 13; and, Mark xiii. 32, &c. That watchman is not faithful, who, being set to defend a house from thieves, or a city from an enemy at hand, will at any hour venture to sleep, trusting that the thief or the enemy will not come. Therefore it is expected of the watchman, that he behave himself every hour of the night, as one who doth not depend upon it that the enemy will tarry until the next hour. Now, therefore, let me, in Christ's name, renew the call and counsel of Jesus Christ to you, to watch as those that know not what hour your Lord will come. Let me call upon you who are hitherto in an unrenewed condition. Depend not upon it, that you will not be in hell before to-morrow morning. You have no reason for any such

dependence; God hath not promised to keep you from it, or to withhold his wrath so long.

How can you reasonably be easy or quiet for one day, or one night, in such a condition, when you know not but your Lord will come this night? And if you should then be found as you now are, unregenerate, how unprepared would you be for his coming, and how fearful would be the consequence! Be exhorted, therefore, for your own sakes, immediately to awake from the sleep of sin, out of sleep, and sleep no more, as not depending on any other day.—Let me exhort you to have no dependence on any future time; to keep every Sabbath, and to hear every sermon, as if it were the last. And when you go into your closet, and address yourself to your Father who seeth in secret, do it in no dependence on any future opportunity to perform the same duty. When you that are young go into company for amusement and diversion, consider that it may be the *last* opportunity of the like nature that ever you may have. In all your dealings with your neighbours, act as if you were never to make another bargain. Behave in your families every day, as though you depended on no other.—Here I shall offer you two motives.

1. Consider, if you will hearken to this counsel, how much it will tend to your safety and peace in life and death. It is the way really and truly to be ready for death; yea, to be fit to live or fit to die; to be ready for affliction and adversity, and for whatever God in his providence shall bring upon you. It is the way to be in, not only an habitual, but actual preparedness for all changes, and particularly for your last change.—It is the way to possess your souls in a serene and undisturbed peace, and to enable you to go on with an immovable fortitude of soul, to meet the most frightful changes, to encounter the most formidable enemies, and to be ready with unshaken confidence to triumph over death whenever you meet him; to have your hearts fixed, trusting in God, as one that stands on a firm foundation, and hath for his habitation the munition of rocks, that is not afraid of evil tidings, but laughs at the fear of the enemy. It will be the way for you to possess that quietness and assurance spoken of, Isa. xxxii. 17. "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." —The servant who always stands watching, will not be at all surprised at the news that his Lord is coming. This will be the way for you to live above the fear of death. Yea, if heaven and earth should shake; you may stand firm and unshaken, being settled on a rock, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. O how happy are such persons, who have such safety and peace! What a blessed peace is that

which arises from such a constant preparation for death! How happy therefore is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing!

2. What dismal calamities and miseries mankind are subject to for want of this, for want of behaving themselves every day, as not depending on any future day! The way of the world is, one day foolishly to depend on another, yea, on many others. And what is the consequence? Why, the consequence with respect to the greater part of the world is, that they live all their days without any true peace or rest of soul. They are all their lifetime subject to a bondage through fear of death. And when death sensibly approaches, they are put into a terrible fright. They have a dismal view of their past lives; the ill improvement of their time, and the sins they have been guilty of, stand staring them in the face, and are more frightful to them than so many devils. And when they look forward into that eternity whither they are going, how dismal is the prospect! O how do their hearts shrink at the thought of it! They go before the judgment-seat of God, as those that are dragged thither, while they would gladly, if they could, hide themselves in the caves and dens of the earth.

And what is worse yet than all the disquietude and terror of conscience in this world; the consequence of a contrary behaviour, with respect to the bulk of mankind, is their eternal perdition. They flatter themselves that they shall see another day, and then another, and trust to that, until finally most of them are swallowed up in hell, to lament their folly to all eternity in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.—Consider how it was with all the foolish virgins who trusted to the delay of the bridegroom's coming; when he came they were surprised, and found unprepared, having no oil in their lamps; and while they went to buy, those who were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut against them, and they came afterwards crying in vain. *Lord, Lord, open to us.*

SERMON XVI.

DISHONESTY, OR THE SIN OF THEFT AND INJUSTICE.

Ex. xx. 15.

Thou shalt not steal.

This is one of the ten commandments which constitute a memory of man's duty as revealed by God. God made many revelations to the children of Israel in the wilderness by Moses: but this made in the Ten Commandments is the chief. Most of those other revelations contained ceremonial or judicial laws: but this contains the moral law. The most of those other laws respected the Jewish nation; but here is a summary of laws binding on all mankind. Those were to last till Christ should come, and have set up the Christian Church; these are of perpetual obligation, and last to the end of the world. God every where, by Moses and the prophets, manifests a far greater regard to the duties of these commands than to any of the rites of the ceremonial law.

These commands were given at Mount Sinai, before any of the precepts of the ceremonial or judicial laws. They were delivered by a great voice out of the midst of the fire, which made all the people in the camp tremble, and afterwards were engraven on tables of stone, and laid up in the ark; the first table containing the four commandments, which teach our duty to God; the second table containing the six last, which teach our duty to man. The sum of the duties of the first table is contained in that which Christ says is the first and great commandment of the law; Matt. xxii. 37. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." The sum of what is required in the second table, is what Christ calls the second command, like unto the first;

verse 39, "The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Of the commands of this second table of the law, the first, (which is the *fifth* of the ten,) refers to that *honour* which is due to our neighbour; the second respects his *life;* the third his *chastity;* the fourth his *estate;* the fifth his good *name;* the sixth and last respects his *possessions* and enjoyments in general. It is that command which respects our neighbour's *estate*, and which is the fourth command of the second table, and the eighth of the whole decalogue, on which I am now to insist: and here I shall make the command itself, as the words of it lie before us in the decalogue, my subject: and as the words of the commandment are in the form of a prohibition, forbidding a certain kind of sin; so I shall consider particularly what it is that this command forbids. The sin that is forbidden in this command is called *stealing;* yet we cannot reasonably understand it only of that act, which in the more ordinary and strict sense of the word, is called stealing. But the iniquity which this command forbids, may be summarily expressed thus:—*An unjust usurping of our neighbour's property, without his consent.*

So much is doubtless comprehended in the text; yet this comprehends much more than is implied in the ordinary use of the word, *stealing;* which is only a secret taking of that which is another's from his possession, without either his consent or knowledge. But the ten commands are not to be limited to the strictest sense of the words, but are to be understood in such a latitude, as to include all things that are of that nature or kind. Hence Christ reproves the Pharisees' interpretation of the sixth command, Matt. v. 21, 22; and also their interpretation of the seventh command; see verses 27, 28; by which it appears that the commands are not to be understood as forbidding only these individual sins which are expressly mentioned, in the strictest sense of the expressions; but all other things of the same nature or kind.—Therefore, what is forbidden in this command is all unjust usurpation of our neighbour's property. Here it may be observed, that an unjust usurpation of our neighbour's property is two-fold; it may be, either by *withholding* what is our neighbour's, or, by *taking* it from him.

SECT. I.

The dishonesty of withholding what is our neighbour's.

There are many ways in which persons may unjustly usurp their neighbour's property, by withholding what is his due, but I shall particularize only two things.

1. The unfaithfulness of men in *not fulfilling their engagements.* Ordinarily when men promise any thing to their neighbour, or enter into engagements by undertaking any business with which their neighbour entrusts them, their engagements invest their neighbour with a right to that which is engaged; so that if they withhold it, they usurp that which belongs to their neighbour. So, when men break their promises, because they find them to be inconvenient, and they cannot fulfil them without difficulty and trouble; or merely because they have altered their minds since they promised; they think they have not consulted their own interest in the promise which they have made, and that if they had considered the matter as much before they promised as they have since, they should not have promised. Therefore they take the liberty to set their own promises aside. Besides, sometimes persons violate this command, by neglecting to fulfil their engagements, through a careless, negligent spirit.

They violate this command, in withholding what belongs to their neighbour, when they are not faithful in any business which they have undertaken to do for their neighbour. If their neighbour have hired them to labour for him for a certain time, and they be not careful well to husband the time; if they be hired to a day's labour, and be not careful to improve the day, as they have reason to think that he who hired justly expected of them; or if they be hired to accomplish such a piece of work, and be not careful to do it well, do it not as if it were for themselves, or as they would have others do for them, when they in like manner betrust them with any business of theirs; or if they be entrusted with any particular affair, which they undertake, but use not that care, contrivance, and diligence, to manage it so as will be to the advantage of him who entrusts them, and as they would manage it, or would insist that it should be managed, if the affair were their own: in all these cases they unjustly withhold what belongs to their neighbour.

2. Another way in which men unjustly withhold what is their neighbour's, is *in neglecting to pay their debts.* Sometimes this happens, because they run so far into debt that they cannot reasonably hope to be able to pay their debts; and this they do, either through pride and affectation of living above their circumstances: or through a grasping covetous disposition or some other corrupt principle. Sometimes they neglect to pay their debts from carelessness of spirit about it, little concerning themselves whether they are paid or not, taking no care to go to their creditor, or to send to him; and if they see him from time to time, they say nothing about their debts. Sometimes they neglect to pay their debts, because it would put them to some inconvenience. The reason why they do it not, is not because they cannot do it, but because they cannot

do it so conveniently as they desire; and so they rather choose to put their creditor to inconvenience by being without what properly belongs to him, than to put themselves to inconvenience by being without what doth not belong to them, and what they have no right to detain. In any of these cases they unjustly usurp the property of their neighbour.

Sometimes persons have that by them with which they could pay their debts if they would; but they want to lay out their money for something else, to buy gay clothing for their children, or to advance their estates, or for some such end. They have other designs in hand, which must fail, if they pay their debts. When men thus withhold what is due, they unjustly usurp what is not their own. Sometimes they neglect to pay their debts, and their excuse for it is, that their creditor doth not need it; that he hath a plentiful estate, and can well bear to lay out of his money. But if the creditor be ever so rich, that gives no right to the debtor to withhold from him that which belongs to him. If it be due, it ought to be paid: for that is the very notion of its being due. It is no more lawful to withhold from a man what is his due, without his consent, because he is rich and able to do without it, than it is lawful to steal from a man because he is rich and able to bear the loss.

SECT. II.

The dishonesty of unjustly taking a neighbour's property.

The principal ways of doing this seem to be these four, by negligence, by fraud, by violence, or by stealing, strictly so called.

1. The first way of unjustly depriving our neighbour of that which is his, is by *negligence*, by carelessly neglecting that which is expected by neighbours one of another, and is necessary to prevent our neighbour's suffering in his estate by us, or by any thing that is ours: and necessary in order that neighbours may live one by another, without suffering in their lawful interests, rights, and possessions, one by another.

For instance, when proper care is not taken by men to prevent their neighbour's suffering in the produce of his fields or inclosures, from their cattle, or other brute creatures: which may be either through negligence with regard to their creatures themselves, in keeping those that are unruly, and giving them their liberty, though they know that they are not fit to have their liberty, and are commonly wont to break into their neighbour's inclosures, greatly to his damage; or through a

neglect of that which is justly expected of them, to defend others' fields from suffering by the neighbourhood of their own. In such cases men are guilty of unjustly taking from their neighbour what is his property.

It is said in the law of Moses, (Exod. xxii. 5,) "If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his vineyard, shall he make restitution." Now a man may be unjustly the cause of his neighbour's field or vineyard being eaten, either by putting in his beast, or so doing what he should not do; or by neglecting to do what he should do, to prevent his beast from getting into his field. What is said in the 144th Psalm, and two last verses, supposes that a people who carry themselves as becomes a people whose God is the Lord, will take thorough care that beasts do not break into their neighbour's inclosures: "That our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be *no breaking in, or going out;* that there be no complaining in our streets. Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

2. Taking away that which is our neighbour's by *fraud*, or by deceiving him, is another mode of usurping our neighbour's property. This is the case when men in their dealings take advantage of their neighbour's ignorance, or oversight, or mistake, to get something from him; or when they make their gains, by concealing the defects of what they sell, putting off bad for good, though this be not done by speaking falsely, but only by keeping silence; or when they take a higher price than what they sell is really worth, and more than they could get for it if the concealed defects were known: or when they sell that for good, which indeed is not merchantable, which is condemned in Amos viii. 6. "Yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat."

If a man puts off something to another with defects that are concealed, knowing that the other receives it as good, and pays such a price for it, under a notion of its having no remarkable defect but what he sees, and takes the price which the buyer under that notion offers; the seller knows that he takes a price of the buyer for that which the buyer had not of him; for the buyer is deceived, and pays for those things which he finds wanting in what he buys. It is just the same thing, as if a man should take a payment that another offers him, through a mistake, for that which he never had of him, thinking that he had it of him, when he had it not.

So a man fraudulently takes away that which is his neighbour's when he gets his money from him by falsely commending what he hath to sell, above what he knows to be the true quality of it; and attributes those good qualities to it

which he knows it has not: or if he does not that, yet sets forth the good qualities in a degree beyond what he knows to be the true degree; or speaks of the defects and ill qualities of what he has to sell, as if they were much less than he knows they are; or, on the contrary, when the buyer will cry down what he is about to buy, contrary to his real opinion of the value of it.—These things, however common they may be in men's dealings one with another, are nothing short of iniquity, and *fraud*, and a great breach of this commandment, upon which we are discoursing. Prov. xx. 14. "It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth."—Many other ways there are whereby men deceive one another in their trading, and whereby they fraudulently and unjustly take away that which is their neighbour's.

3. Another mode of unjustly invading and taking away our neighbour's property, is by *violence*. This violence may be done in different degrees.—Men may take away their neighbour's goods either by mere open violence, either making use of superior strength, forcibly taking away any thing that is his; or by express or implicit threatenings forcing him to yield up what he has into their hands; as is done in open robbery and piracy. Or, by making use of some advantages which they have over their neighbour, in their dealings with him, constrain him to yield to their gaining unreasonably of him; as when they take advantage of their neighbour's poverty to extort unreasonably from him for those things that he is under a necessity of procuring for himself or family. This is an oppression against which God hath shown a great displeasure in his word. Levit. xxv. 14. "And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour, ye shall not oppress one another." Prov. xxii. 22, 23. "Rob not the poor, because he is poor, neither oppress the afflicted in the gate; for the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them." And, Amos iv. 1, 2. "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mount of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy; the Lord hath sworn in his holiness, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks."

When the necessity of poor indigent people is the very thing whence others take occasion to raise the price of provisions, even above the market; this is such an oppression. There are many poor people whose families are in such necessity of bread, that they in their extremity will give almost any price for it, rather than go without it. Those who have to sell, though hereby they have an advantage in their hands, yet surely should not take the advantage to raise the price of provisions. We should doubtless think that we had just cause to complain, if we were in such necessity as they are, and

were reduced to their straits, and were treated in this manner and let us remember, that it is owing only to the distinguishing goodness of God to us, that we are not in their circumstances; and whatever our present circumstances are, yet we know not but that the time may still come when their case may be ours.

Men may oppress others, though they be not poor, if they will take advantage of any particular necessities of their neighbour, unreasonably to extort from him. The case may be so at particular seasons, that those who are not poor, may stand in particular and extraordinary need of what we have, or what we can do for them; so that it would be greatly to their disadvantage or loss to be without it. Now to take advantage of their urgent circumstances, to get from them an unreasonable price, is a violent dealing with our neighbours.

It is very unreasonable to say, Such men are so rich, and get money so much more easily than I, that it is no hurt for me to take advantage when they are in special need, and make them give me, for work that I do for them, a great deal more than I would desire to ask of other men. Let such consider, whether, if they should by any means hereafter get forward in the world, and come to have plentiful estates, they would like that persons should act upon such principles towards them. That men are rich, gives us no more right to take away from them what is theirs in this way, than it does to steal from them because they come easily by their property, and can do without it better than we.

Again, another thing that is a kind of violent taking from our neighbour what is his, is taking the advantage of the law to gain from others, when their cause in honesty and conscience is just and good. The circumstances of mankind their rights, possessions, and dealings one with another, are so various, that it is impossible that any body of human laws, should be contrived to suit all possible cases and circumstances. Hence the best laws may be abused and perverted to purposes contrary to the general design of laws, which is to maintain the rights and secure the properties of mankind. Human laws have a regard due to them, but always in subordination to the higher laws of God and nature. Therefore when it so happens, that we have an advantage by the law, to gain what the laws of moral honesty allow not, it is an oppression and violence to take the advantage. That human laws allow it, will not excuse us before God, the judge of the world, who will judge us another day by his own laws, and not by the laws of the commonwealth.

4. The fourth way of unjustly taking from our neighbour that which is his, is *stealing*, so called. All unjust ways of taking away, or invading, or usurping what is our neighbour's

are called stealing in the most extensive use of the word, and all is included in the expression of this command. Yet the word stealing, as it is more commonly used, is not of so great extent, and intends not all unjust invasion of our neighbour's property, but only a particular kind of unjust taking. So that in common speech when we speak of fraudulent dealings, of extortion, unfaithfulness in our trust, and stealing, we understand different sins by these expressions, though they are an usurpation of what is our neighbour's.

Stealing, strictly so called, may be thus defined, *A designed taking of our neighbour's goods from him without his consent or knowledge.* It is not merely withholding of what is our neighbour's, but a taking away: and therein it differs from unfaithfulness in our undertakings and betrustments, and also from negligence in the payment of debts. It is a designed or wilful depriving of our neighbour of what is his, and so differs from wronging our neighbour in his estate through carelessness or negligence. It is a taking of our neighbour's goods without his knowledge; it is a private clandestine taking away, and so differs from robbery by open violence.

So also it differs from extortion: for in that the person knows what is taken from him. The aim of him that takes is no other than that he should know it; for he makes use of other means than his ignorance, to obtain what is his neighbour's, *viz.* violence to constrain him to give it up. So also it differs from fraudulent dealing or trading. For though in fraudulent dealing the lawful possessor doth not understand the way and means by which he parts with his goods, and by which his neighbour becomes possessed of them; yet he knows the *fact:* The deceiver designedly conceives the *manner* only. But in stealing, strictly so called, he that takes, intends not that it shall be *known* that he takes. It also differs from extortion and fraudulent dealing, in that it is wholly without the consent of the owner. For in extortion, though there be no free consent, yet the consent of the owner is in some sort gained, though by oppressive means. So in fraudulent dealing consent is in some sort obtained, though it be by deceit. But in stealing no kind of consent is obtained.

A person may steal from another, yet not take his goods without the knowledge of the owner; because he may know of it accidentally, he may see what is done, unawares to the thief. Therefore I have defined stealing, a designed taking without the consent or knowledge of the owner. If it be accidentally known yet it is not known in the design and intention of the thief. The thief is so far at least private in it, that he gives no notice to the owner at the time. It must be also without the consent of the owner. A person may take without the knowledge of the owner, and yet not take without his consent. The owner may know not of his taking at the time, or of his taking any parti-

cular things, yet there may be his implicit consent. There may have been a general consent, if not expressed yet implied. The circumstances of the affair may be such, that his consent may well be presumed upon, either from an established custom, allowed by all, or from the nature of the case; the thing being of such a nature, that it may well be presumed that none would refuse their consent: as in the case of a person's accidentally passing through his neighbour's vineyard in Israel, and eating his fill of grapes: or from the circumstances of the persons, as is the case, in many instances, of the freedom which near neighbours and intimate friends often take, and of that boldness which they use with respect to each other's goods.

In all *such* cases, though the owner do not particularly know what is done, yet he that takes, does it not with any contrived, designed concealment. And though there is no express particular consent, yet there is a consent either implied, or justly presumed upon; and he that takes, doth not designedly do it without consent.

It may happen in some cases, that one may take the goods of another both without his knowledge and consent, either explicit or implicit, but through mistake; yet he may not be guilty of stealing. Therefore the *design* of him who takes must come into consideration. When he designedly takes away that which is his neighbour's, without his consent or knowledge, then he steals. So that if it should happen, that he has both his consent and knowledge, without his design he steals. And if it so happen that he takes without either his neighbour's consent or knowledge, and yet without his own design, he steals not. I desire therefore that this, which I take to be the true definition of theft or stealing, may be borne in mind, viz. A designed taking of our neighbour's goods, without his consent or knowledge; because it is needful to clear up many things which I have yet to say on this subject.

SECT. III.

Dishonest excuses.

Here I shall particularly take notice of some things, by which persons may be ready to excuse themselves, in privately taking their neighbour's goods, which however cannot be a just excuse for it, nor will they make such a taking not to be stealing.

1. That the person whose goods are privately taken, *owes* or is in debt to him that takes them. Some may be ready to say that they do not take that which is their neighbour's, they take that which is their own, because as much is due to them, their neighbour owes them as much, and unjustly

detains it, and they know not whether ever they shall get their due of him. Their neighbour will not do them right, and therefore they must right themselves.

But such pleas as these will not justify a man in going in a private and clandestine manner to take away any thing of his neighbour's from his possession, without his consent or knowledge; his doing this is properly stealing. For though something of his neighbour's which is as valuable as what he takes, may be due to him; that doth not give him such a right to his neighbour's goods, that he may take any thing that is his, according to his own pleasure, and at what time, and in what manner he pleases. That his neighbour is in debt to him, doth not give him a right to take it upon himself to be his own judge, so that he may judge for himself, which of his neighbour's goods shall be taken from him to discharge the debt; and that he may act merely according to his own private judgment and pleasure in such a case, without so much as acquainting his neighbour with the affair.

In order to warrant such a proceeding as this, every thing that his neighbour has, must be his. A man may not take indifferently what he pleases out of a number of goods, without the consent or knowledge of any other person, unless all is his own, to be disposed of as he pleases. Such a way of using goods according to our own pleasure, taking what we will, and at what time we will, can be warranted by nothing but a dominion over the whole. And though he who is in debt may be guilty of great injustice in detaining what is due to another; yet it doth not thence follow, but that he that takes from him, may also be guilty of great injustice towards him. The course he takes to right himself may be very irregular and unreasonable; and such a course, that if universally allowed and pursued in such cases, would throw human society into confusion.

When men obtain a property in any of the professions of this life, they are at the same time also invested with a right to retain a possession of them, till they are deprived of them in some fair and regular proceeding. Every man has a right to hold his estate, and keep possession of his properties, so that no other can lawfully use them as his own, until he either parts with them of his own accord, or until it be taken from him according to some established rule, in a way of open justice. Therefore he who under pretence of having just demands upon his neighbour, privately takes his goods without his consent, takes them unjustly, and is guilty of stealing.

2. Much less will it make such a private taking not to be stealing, that he who takes, has, in way of kindness or gift done for the person from whom he takes, as much as is equivalent to the *value* of what he takes. If a man do his

neighbour some considerable kindness, whether in labour, or in something that he gives him, what he does or gives is supposed to be done voluntarily, and he is not to make his neighbour debtor for it; and therefore if any thing be privately taken away, upon any such consideration, it is gross stealing.

For instance, when any person needs to have any services done for him, where a considerable number of hands are necessary; it is common for the neighbourhood to meet together and join in helping their neighbour, and frequently some provision is made for their entertainment. If any person who hath assisted on such an occasion, and is a partaker at such an entertainment, shall think within himself, the service I have done is worth a great deal more than what I shall eat and drink here, and therefore shall take liberty privately to take of the provision set before him, to carry away with him, purposely concealing the matter from him who hath entertained him, this is gross stealing; and it is a very ridiculous plea which they make to excuse so unmanly and vile an act.

Persons in such cases may say to themselves, that the provision is made for them, and set before them; that it is a time wherein considerable liberty is given, and they think, seeing they have done so much for their host, they may take something more than they eat and drink there. But then let them be open in it; let them acquaint those with it who make the entertainment; and let it not be done in anywise, in a secret, clandestine manner, with the least design or attempt to avoid their notice; on the contrary, let care be taken to give them notice and obtain their consent.

When persons do such things in a private manner, they condemn themselves by their own act; their doing what they do secretly, shows that they are conscious to themselves, that they go beyond what it is expected they should do, and do what would not be allowed, if it were know. Such an act, however light they may make of it, is abominable theft, and what any person of religion or any sense of the dignity of their own nature, would to the greatest degree abhor and detest.

3. It is not sufficient to make a private taking without consent not to be stealing, that it is but a small matter that is taken. If the thing be of little value, yet if it be worth a purposed concealing from the owner, the value is great enough to render the taking of it proper theft. If it be pretended that the thing is of so small consequence, that it is not worth asking for; then surely it is not worth a purposed concealing from the owner, when it is taken. He who under this pretence, conceals his taking, in the very act contradicts his own pretence; for his action shows that he apprehends, or at least sus-

pects, that, as small a matter as it is, the owner would not like the taking of it, if he knew it; otherwise the taker would not desire to conceal it.

The owner of the goods, and not other people, is the proper judge, whether what he owns be of such a value, that it is worth his while to keep it, and to refuse his consent to the taking of it from him. He who possesses, and not he who takes away, has a right to judge of what consequence his possessions are to him. He has a right to set what value he pleases on them, and to treat them according to that value. Besides, merely that a thing is of small value, cannot give a right to others, purposely and designedly to take it away, without the knowledge or consent of the owner. Because if this only gives a right, then all have a right to take things of small value; and at this rate a great number of persons, each of them taking from a man that which is of small value, might take away all he has.

Therefore, it will not justify persons, in purposely taking such things as fruit from the trees, or gardens, or fields of their neighbours, without their knowledge or consent, that the things which they take are things of small value: nor is that sufficient to render such an act, not an act of theft properly so called. This shows also that the smallness of the value of what is privately taken at feasts and entertainments, doth not render the taking of such things not stealing.

The small value of a thing may in some cases justify an occasional taking of things, so far as we may from thence, and from what is generally allowed, reasonably presume that the owner gives his consent. But if that be the case, and persons really take, as supposing that the owner consents to such occasional taking, then he that takes will not at all endeavour to do what he does secretly, nor in any measure to avoid notice. But merely the smallness of the value of a thing, can never justify a secret taking of what is another's.

SECT. IV.

The subject applied.—The dishonest warned.

The first use I would make of this doctrine, is to *warn* against all injustice and dishonesty, as to what appertains to our neighbour's temporal goods or possessions. Let me warn all to avoid all ways of unjustly invading or usurping what is their neighbour's, and let me press that exhortation of the apostle; Rom. xii. 17, "Provide things honest in the sight of all men;" which implies, that those things which we provide for ourselves, and use as our own, should be such as we come

honestly by; and especially that we should avoid all clandestine or *underhand* ways of obtaining any thing that is our neighbour's, either by fraudulent dealing, or by that taking without our neighbour's knowledge and consent, of which we have been speaking.

I warn you to beware of dishonesty in withholding what is your neighbour's, either by unfaithfulness to your trust in any business which you undertake, or by withholding your neighbour's just and honest dues. Consider that saying of the apostle, Rom. xiii. 8. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another." Be also warned against wronging your neighbour or injuring him in his enclosures, or on any of his just rights and properties, through careless neglect of what is reasonably expected by neighbours one of another, in order that they may live one by another without mutual injury. Let all beware that they bring not guilt on their souls in the sight of God, by taking an advantage to oppress any person. Especially beware of taking advantage of others' poverty to extort from them: for God will defend their cause, and you will be no gainers by such oppression.

Beware also of all injustice by deceitful and fraudulent dealing. You doubtless meet with abundance of temptation to fraud, and have need to keep a strong guard upon yourselves. There are many temptations to falsehood in trading, both about what you would buy, and what you have to sell. There are, in buying, temptations to do as in Prov. xx. 14. "It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer." There are many temptations to take indirect courses, to blind those with whom you deal, about the qualities of what you have to sell, to diminish the defects of your commodities, or to conceal them, and to put off things for good which are bad. And there are doubtless many other ways that men meet with temptations to deceive others, which your own experience will better suggest to you than I can.

But here I shall take occasion to speak of a particular kind of fraud, which is very aggravated, and is rather a defrauding of God than man. What I mean is, *the giving of that which is bad for good in public contributions.* Though it be matter of great shame and lamentation that it should be so, yet it is to be feared, from what has sometimes been observed, that there are some who, when there is a public contribution to be made for the poor, or some other pious and charitable use, sometimes take that opportunity *to put off their bad money.* That which they find, or think their neighbours will refuse to take at their hands, because they will have opportunity to see what is offered them and to observe the badness of it, even *that* they therefore take opportunity to put off to God.

Hereby they endeavour to save their credit; for they apprehend that they shall be concealed. They appear with others to go to the contribution, as it is not known but that they put in that which is good. But they cheat the church of God, and defraud the expectations of the poor; or, rather, they lie to God: for those who receive what is given, stand as Christ's receivers, and not as acting for themselves in this matter.

They that do thus, do that which is very much of the same nature with that sin, against which God denounces that dreadful curse in Mal. i. 14. "Cursed be the deceiver which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of Hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen." *That hath in his flock a male*, i. e. that has in his flock that which is good and fit to be offered to God; for it was the male of the flock principally that was appointed, in the law of Moses, to be offered in sacrifice. He has in his flock that which is good, but he vows and sacrifices to the Lord, "the torn, the lame, and the sick," as it is said in the foregoing verse; ye said also, "Behold what a weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of Hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hands? saith the Lord."

Contributions in the Christian church come in the room of sacrifices in the Jewish church: mercy comes in the room of sacrifice. And what is offered in the way of mercy is as much offered to God as the sacrifices of old were. For what is done to the poor is done to Christ, and he that hath pity on the poor, lendeth to the Lord; Prov. xix. 17. The Jews that offered the sick and lame of the flock, knew that if they had offered it to their governor, and had attempted to put it off as part of the tribute or public taxes due to their earthly rulers, it would not be accepted, and therefore they were willing to put it off to God. "And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of Hosts."

So those persons who purposely put bad money into contributions, know that what they put in would not be accepted, if they should offer to pay their public taxes. Yea, they know that their *neighbours* would not accept it at their hands; and therefore they are willing to save themselves by putting it off to God.

This practice has also very much of the nature of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. What they offered was by

way of contribution for charitable uses. The brethren sold what they had, and brought it into a common stock, and put all under the care of deacons, that the poor might every one be supplied. Ananias and Sapphira brought a part of their possessions, and put it into the common stock; and their sin was, that they put it in for more than it really was. It was but a part of what they had, and they put it in, and would have it accepted, as if it had been all. So those among us, of whom I am speaking, put off what they put into the charitable stock for more than it is. For they put it in, under the notion that it is something of some value: they intend it shall be so taken by the church that sees them go to the contribution, when indeed they put in nothing at all.

Ananias and Sapphira were charged with lying to God, and doing an act of fraud towards God himself, in what they did: Acts v. 4. "Whilst it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." So those who knowingly put bad money for good into a contribution for a charitable use, as much as in them lies commit an act of fraud and deceit towards God. For the deacons who receive what is contributed, receive it not in their own names, but as Christ's receivers. I hope these things may be sufficient to deter every reader from ever daring to do such a thing for the future.

Again, another thing I would warn you against is, stealing, properly and strictly so called; or designedly taking away any of your neighbour's goods without his consent or knowledge. And especially I would now take occasion to warn against a practice which is very common in the country, particularly among children and young people; and that is, stealing fruit from their neighbours' trees or enclosures. There is a licentious liberty taken by many children and young people, in making bold with their neighbours' fruit; and it is to be feared, that they are too much countenanced in it by their parents and many elder people.

I am sensible, that the great thing which is pleaded, and made very much the ground of this liberty which is taken, and so much tolerated, is a very abusive and unreasonable construction and application of that text of scripture in Deut. xxiii. 24. "When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill. But thou shalt not put any in thy vessel." Because this text seems to be so much mistaken and misimproved, I shall therefore endeavour particularly to state the matter of persons taking their neighbours' fruit, and to set it in a just and clear light as concerning this text.

It was to eat their fill of grapes when they *occasionally* came into or passed through their neighbour's vineyard, and

not that they should go thither on *purpose* to eat grapes. This is manifest by the manner of expression: "*When thou comest* into thy neighbour's vineyard, thou mayest eat;" *i. e.* when thou art come thither on some other occasion. If God had meant to give them leave to come thither on purpose, for no other end, it would not have been expressed so: but rather thus, *Thou mayest come* into thy neighbour's vineyard, and eat grapes thy fill.—Such were the circumstances of that people, and vineyards among them were so common, that there was no danger that this liberty would be attended with ill consequence. It is manifest throughout the history of Israel, that vineyards among them were so common that the people in general had them. Every husbandman among them was a vinedresser; and a great part of the business of a husbandman among them, consisted in dressing and taking care of his vineyards. Grapes seem to have been the most common sort of fruit that they had. Besides, there was no liberty given for persons to go on purpose to a vineyard to eat the fruit of it. So that there was no danger of neighbours suffering one by another, by any such liberty.—The liberty did not tend to any such consequence, as the flocking of a great number to eat grapes, whereby the fruit of the vineyard might be much diminished.

Such were the circumstances of the case, that the consent of the owners of vineyards in general might well be presumed upon, though no such express liberty had been given. You may remember, that in the definition of stealing, I observed, that explicit consent is not always necessary; because the case may be so circumstanced, that consent may be well presumed on. And the reason why consent might well be presumed on in the case of eating grapes, of which we are now speaking, is, that there could be no sensible injury, nor any danger of any ill consequences, by which a man would sensibly suffer in the benefit of his vineyard. Hence it is the more easy to determine, what would, and what would not be justified by this text, among us. Suppose a particular person among us had a vineyard of the same kind with those which the children of Israel had, it would not justify others in using the same liberty when occasionally passing through it; because it would be a rare thing, and the rarity and scarcity of the fruit would render it of much greater value. Besides, if one man were distinguished by such a possession, to allow of such a liberty would have a much greater tendency to ill consequences, than if they were common, as they were in the land of Canaan. There would be danger of many persons falsely pretending and making occasions to pass through the vineyard, for the sake of such rare fruit.

Nor would it be a parallel case, if men in general among us had each of them a *few* vines. That would be a very dif-

ferent thing from persons in general having large vineyards. Nor would this text, in such a case, warrant men's eating their fill of grapes when occasionally passing by.—And though all in general had vineyards, as they had in the land of Canaan, this text would not justify men in going into their neighbour's vineyard on purpose to eat the fruit. No such liberty is given in the text. If there had been such liberty, it might have been of ill consequence. For the sake of saving their own grapes, men might make a practice of going and sending their children into their neighbour's vineyards, to eat their fill from time to time.

But the liberty given in this text to the children of Israel, seems to be very parallel with the liberty taken among us, to take up an apple or two and eat, as we are occasionally passing through a neighbour's orchard: which as our circumstances, are, we may do, and justly presume that we have the owner's consent. This is a liberty that we take, and find no ill consequences. It was very much so with vineyards in the land of Canaan, as it is with orchards among us. Apples in some countries are a rare fruit; and there it would by no means be warrantable for persons to take the same liberty, when occasionally passing by their neighbour's apple tree, which we warrantably take here, when going through a neighbour's orchard.

The consideration of these things will easily show the great abuse that is made of this text, when it is brought to justify such a resorting of children and others to their neighbour's fruit trees, as is sometimes, on purpose to take and eat the fruit. Indeed this practice is not only not justified by the law of Moses, but it is in itself unreasonable, and contrary to the law of nature. The consequences of it are pernicious, so that a man can have no dependence on enjoying the fruit of his labour or the benefit of his property in those things, which possibly he may very much value. He can have no assurance but that he shall be mainly deprived of what he has, and that others will not have the principal benefit of it; and so that his end in planting and cultivating that from which he expected those fruits of the earth, which God hath given for the use, comfort, and delight of mankind, will not be in the main frustrated.

SECT. V.

An Exhortation to Honesty.

Under this use, I shall confine myself to two particulars, many other things having been already spoken to.

1. I shall hence take occasion to exhort *parents* to restrain their children from stealing, and particularly from being guilty of theft in stealing the fruits of their neighbour's trees or fields. Christian parents are obliged to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But how much otherwise do they act who bring them up in theft! And those parents are guilty of this, who—though they do not directly teach them to steal, by example and setting them about it, yet—*tolerate* them in it.

Parents should take effectual care, not only to instruct their children better, and to warn them against any such thievish practices, but also thoroughly to restrain them. Children who practise stealing, make themselves vile. Stealing, by the common consent of mankind is a very vile practice; therefore those parents that will not take thorough care to restrain their children from such a practice, will be guilty of the same sin which God so highly resented, and awfully punished in *Eli*, of which we read, 1 Sam. iii. 13. "For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

2. I exhort those who are conscious in themselves that they have heretofore wronged their neighbour, to make *restitution*. This is a duty, the obligation to which is exceedingly plain. If a person was wronged in *taking* away any thing that was his, certainly he is wronged also in *detaining* it; and all the while that a person, who has been guilty of wronging his neighbour, neglects to make restitution, he lives in that wrong. He not only lives impenitent as to that first wrong of which he was guilty, but he *continually* wrongs his neighbour. A man who hath gotten any thing from another wrongfully, *goes on* to wrong him every day that he neglects to restore it, when he has opportunity to do it. The person injured did not only suffer wrong from the other when his goods were first taken from him, but he suffers new injustice from him all the while they are unjustly kept from him.

Therefore I counsel you who are conscious that you have heretofore wronged your neighbour, either by fraud, or oppression, or unfaithfulness, or stealing, whether lately or formerly, though it may have been a great while ago, speedily to go and make restitution for all the wrong your neighbour

has suffered at your hands. That it was done long ago, doth not quit you from obligation to restore. This is a duty with which you must comply; you cannot be acquitted without it. As long as you neglect it, it will be unreasonable in you to expect any forgiveness of God. For what ground can you have to think that God will pardon you, as long as you wilfully continue in the same wrong, and wrong the same man still every day, by detaining from him that which is his? You in your prayers ask of God, that he would forgive all your sins; but your very prayers are mockery, if you still wilfully continue in those sins.—Indeed if you go and confess your faults to your neighbour, and he will freely acquit you from making restitution, you will be acquitted from the obligation; for in so doing, your neighbour gives you what before was his. But otherwise you cannot be acquitted.

I would leave this advice with all, for direction in their behaviour on their death beds. Indeed you should not by any means put it off till you come to die; and you will run the most fearful risk in so doing. But if you will not do it now, while you are in health, I will leave it with you to remember, when you shall come to lie on your death-beds. Doubtless, then if you have the use of your reason, you will be concerned for the salvation of your poor souls. And let this be one thing then remembered, as absolutely necessary in order to your salvation, that before you die, you must make restitution for whatever wrong you shall have done any of your neighbours; or at least leave orders that such restitution be made; otherwise you will, as it were, go out of the world, and go before your Great Judge, with stolen goods in your hands. And certainly it will not be very comfortable or safe, to bring them into his infinitely holy and dreadful presence, when he sits on his throne of judgment, with his eyes as a flame of fire, being more pure than to look on iniquity: when he is about to sentence you to your everlasting unalterable state.

Every one here present, who has been guilty of wronging his neighbour, and has not made restitution, must die. Let all such therefore remember this counsel now given them, on the day when death shall approach, if they shall be so foolish as to neglect it till that time.

SERMON XVII.

CHRISTIAN CHARITY, &c. &c.

DEUT. xv. 7—12.

If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release is at hand: and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

SECT. I.

The Words explained.

THE duty here enjoined is giving to the poor; "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: Thou shalt surely give him." Here by *thy poor brother* is to be understood the same as in other places is meant by *neighbour*. It is explained in Levit. xxv. 35, to mean not only those of their own nation, but even strangers and sojourners: "And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in

decay with thee: then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a *stranger*, or a *sojourner*." The Pharisees indeed interpreted it to signify only one of their own nation; but Christ condemns this interpretation, Luke x. 29, &c. and teaches, in contradiction to their opinion, that the rules of charity, in the law of Moses, are to be extended to the Samaritans, who were not of their nation, and between whom and the Jews there was the most bitter enmity, and who were a people very troublesome to the Jews.

God gives us direction *how* we are to give in such a case, viz. *bountifully* and *willingly*. We should give *bountifully*, and *sufficiently* for the supply of the poor's need: verse 7, 8. "Thou shall not shut up thine hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth." And again, in verse 11. "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land." Again, we should give *willingly*, and *without grudging*: verse 7. "Thou shalt not harden thine heart from thy poor brother;" and verse 10. "And thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest him."

We may also observe how peremptorily this duty is here enjoined, and how much it is insisted on. It is repeated over and over again, and enjoined in the strongest terms: verse 7. "Thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother;" verse 8. "But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him;" verse 10. "Thou shalt surely give him;" verse 11. "I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother; to thy poor, and to thy needy."

Moreover, God strictly warns against objections, verse 9. "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, "The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand: and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee." The matter concerning the seventh year, or year of release, was thus: God had given Israel a law, that every seventh year should be a year of release; that if any man had lent any thing to any of his poor neighbours, if the latter had not been able to repay it before that year, the former should release it, and should not exact it of his neighbour, but give it to him. Therefore God warns the children of Israel against making of this an objection to helping their poor neighbours, that the year of release was near at hand; and it was not likely that they would be able to refund it again before that time, and then they should lose it wholly, because then they would be obliged to release it. God foresaw that the wickedness of their hearts would be ready to make such an objection; but

very strictly warns them against it, that they should not be the more backward to supply the wants of the needy for that, but should be willing to give him: "Thou shalt be willing to lend, expecting nothing again."

Men are exceedingly apt to make objections against such duties, which God speaks of here as a manifestation of the wickedness of their hearts: "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart," &c. The warning is very strict. God doth not only say, Beware that thou do not actually refuse to give him: but, Beware that thou have not one objecting thought against it, arising from a backwardness to liberality. God warns against the beginnings of uncharitableness in the heart, and against whatever tends to a forbearance to give: "And thou give him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee." God warns them from the guilt which they would be liable to bring upon themselves hereby.

We may observe here several *enforcements* of this duty. There is a reason of this duty implied in God's calling him that is needy, *our brother:* "Thou shalt not shut thine hand from thy poor *brother;*" and verse 9. "Beware that thine eye be not evil against thy poor *brother;*" and verse 11. "Thou shalt open thine hand wide to thy *brother.*" We are to look upon ourselves as related to all mankind, but especially to those who are of the visible people of God. We are to look upon them as brethren, and to treat them accordingly. We shall be base indeed, if we be not willing to help *a brother* in want.—Another enforcement of this duty is the *promise* of God, that for this thing he will bless us in all our works, and in all that we put our hands unto; a promise that we shall not lose, but gain by it, (verse 10.)—Another is, that we shall never want proper objects of our charity and bounty: verse 11. "For the poor shall never cease out of thy land." This God saith to the Jewish church; and the like Christ saith to the Christian church, Matt. xxvi. 11. "The poor ye have always with you." This is to cut off an excuse that uncharitable persons would be ready to make for not giving, that they could find no body to give to, that they saw none who needed. God cuts off such an excuse, by telling us, that he would so order it in his providence, that his people every where, and in all ages, shall have occasion for the exercise of that virtue.

From this account the doctrine is obvious, that it is the absolute and indispensable duty of the people of God, to give bountifully and willingly for supplying the wants of the needy.—But more particularly,

1. It is the duty of the people of God, to give *bountifully* for the aforesaid purpose. It is commanded once and again in the text, "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy poor

brother." Merely to give something is not sufficient; it answers not the rule, nor comes up to the holy command of God; but we must open our hand wide. What we give, considering our neighbour's wants, and our ability, should be such as may be called a *liberal* gift. What is meant in the text by opening the hand wide, with respect to those that are able, is explained in ver. 8. "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shall surely lend him sufficient for his want in that which he needeth." By lending here, as is evident by the two following verses, and as we have just now shown, is not only meant lending to receive again; the word *lend* in scripture is sometimes used for giving; as in Luke vi. 35. "Do good and lend, hoping for nothing again."

We are commanded, therefore, to give our poor neighbour what is sufficient for his need. There ought to be none suffered to live in pinching want, among a visible people of God, who are able; unless in case of idleness, or prodigality, or some such case which the word of God excepts.—It is said that the children of Israel should lend to the poor, and in the year of release should release what they had lent *save when there should be no poor among them.* It is rendered in the margin, *to the end there be no poor among you*; i. e. you should so supply the wants of the needy, that there may be none among you in pinching want. This translation seems the more likely to be the true one, because God says, ver. 11. that there shall be no such time when there shall be no poor, who shall be proper objects of charity.—When persons give very *sparingly*, it is no manifestation of charity, but of a contrary spirit: 2 Cor. ix. 5. "Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness." The apostle here calls a very sparing contribution, matter of covetousness.

2. It is the duty of the visible people of God, to give for the supply of the needy, *freely*, and without grudging. It doth not at all answer the rule in the sight of God, if it be done with an inward grudging, or if the heart be grieved, and it inwardly hurt the man to give what he gives: Thou shalt surely give," says God, "and thine heart shall not be grieved." God looks at the heart, and the hand is not accepted without it: 2 Cor. ix. 7. "Every man according as he hath purposed in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver."

3. This is a duty to which God's people are under very strict *obligations.* It is not merely a commendable thing for

a man to be kind and bountiful to the poor, but our bounden duty, as much a duty as it is to pray, or to attend public worship, or any thing else whatever; and the neglect of it brings great guilt upon any person.

SECT. II.

Of the Obligation of Christians to perform the Duty of Charity to the poor.

This duty is absolutely commanded, and much insisted on in the word of God. Where have we any command in the Bible laid down in stronger terms, and in a more peremptory urgent manner, than the command of giving to the poor? We have the same law in a positive manner laid down in Levit. xxv. 35, &c. "And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with thee." And at the conclusion of ver. 38, God enforces it with saying, *I am the Lord thy God.*

It is mentioned in scripture, not only as a duty, but a great duty. Indeed it is generally acknowledged to be a duty to be kind to the needy; but by many it seems not to be looked upon as a duty of great importance. However, it is mentioned in scripture as one of the greater and more essential duties of religion; Micah vi. 8. "He that showeth thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, *to love mercy*, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Here *to love mercy* is mentioned as one of the three great things that are the sum of all religion. So it is mentioned by the apostle James, as one of the three things wherein pure and undefiled religion consists: James i. 27. "Pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

So Christ tells us, it is one of the weightier matters of the law: Matt. xxii. 23. "Ye have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." The scriptures again and again teach us, that it is a more weighty and essential thing than the attendance on the outward ordinances of worship: Hos. vi. 6. "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice:" Matt. ix. 13, and xii. 7. I know of scarce any duty which is so much insisted on, so pressed and urged upon us, both in the Old Testament and New, as this duty of charity to the poor.

The reason of the thing strongly obliges to it. It is not only very positively and frequently insisted on by God, but it

is most reasonable in itself; and so, on this account, there is reason why God should much insist upon it.

1. It is most reasonable, considering the general state and nature of mankind. This is such as renders it most reasonable that we should love our neighbour as ourselves; for men are made in the image of our God, and on this account are worthy of our love. Besides, we are all nearly allied one to another by nature. We have all the same nature, like faculties, like dispositions, like desires of good, like needs, like aversion to misery, and are made of one blood; and we are made to subsist by society and union one with another. God hath made us with such a nature, that we cannot subsist without the help of one another. Mankind in this respect are as the members of the natural body; one cannot subsist alone, without an union with, and the help of the rest.

Now, this state of mankind shows how reasonable and suitable it is, that men should love their neighbours; and that we should not look every one at his own things, but every man also at the things of others, Phil. ii. 4. A selfish spirit is very unsuitable to the nature and state of mankind. He who is all for himself, and none for his neighbours, deserves to be cut off from the benefit of human society, and to be turned out among wild beasts, to subsist by himself as well as he can. A private niggardly spirit is more suitable for wolves and other beasts of prey, than for human beings.

To love our neighbours as ourselves, is the sum of the moral law respecting our fellow-creatures; and to help them, and to contribute to their relief, is the most natural expression of this love. It is vain to pretend to a spirit of love to our neighbours, when it is grievous to us to part with any thing for their help when under calamity. They who love only in word, and in tongue, and not in deed, have no love in truth. Any profession without it is a vain pretence. To refuse to give to the needy, is unreasonable, because we therein do to others contrary to what we would have others do to us in like circumstances. We are very sensible of our own calamities; and when we suffer, are ready enough to think that our state requires the compassion and help of others; and are ready enough to think it hard, if others will not deny themselves in order to help us when in straits.

2. It is especially reasonable, considering our circumstances, under such a dispensation of grace as that of the gospel. Consider how much God hath done for us, how greatly he hath loved us, what he hath given us, when we were so unworthy, and when he could have no addition to his happiness by us. Consider that silver and gold, and earthly crowns, were in his esteem but mean things to give us, and he hath therefore given us his own Son. Christ loved and pitied

us, when we were poor, and he laid out himself to help, and even did shed his own blood for us without grudging. He did not think much to deny himself, and to be at great cost for us vile wretches, in order to make us rich, and to clothe us with kingly robes, when we were naked: to feast us at his own table with dainties infinitely costly, when we were starving; to advance us from the dunghill, and set us among princes, and make us to inherit the throne of his glory, and so to give us the enjoyment of the greatest wealth and plenty to all eternity; agreeably to 2 Cor. viii. 9. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Considering all these things, what a poor business will it be, that those who hope to share these benefits, yet cannot give something for the relief of a poor neighbour without grudging! that it should grieve them to part with a small matter, to help a fellow-servant in calamity, when Christ did not grudge to shed his own blood for them!

How unsuitable is it for us, who live only by kindness, to be unkind! What would have become of us, if Christ had been so saving of his blood, and loth to bestow it, as many men are of their money or goods? or if he had been as ready to excuse himself from dying for us, as men commonly are to excuse themselves from charity to their neighbour? If Christ would have made objections of such things, as men commonly object to performing deeds of charity to their neighbour, he would have found enough of them.

Besides, Christ, by his redemption, has brought us into a more near relation one to another, hath made us children of God, children in the same family. We are all brethren, having God for our common Father; which is much more than to be brethren in any other family. He hath made us all one body; therefore we ought to be united, and subserve one another's good, and bear one another's burdens, as is the case with the members of the same natural body. If one of the members suffer, all the other members bear the burden with it, 1 Cor. xii. 26. If one member be diseased or wounded, the other members of the body will minister to it, and help it. So surely it should be in the body of Christ: Gal. vi. 2. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Apply these things to yourselves; and inquire, whether you do not lie under guilt on account of the neglect of this duty, in withholding that charity which God requires of you towards the needy? You have often been put upon examining yourselves, whether you do not live in some way displeasing to God. Perhaps at such times it never came into your minds, whether you did not lie under guilt on this account.—But this neglect certainly brings guilt upon the soul in the sight of

God, as is evident by the text: "Beware that thine eye be not evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be a sin unto thee," ver. 9. This is often mentioned as one of the sins of Judah and Jerusalem, for which God was about to bring such terrible judgments upon them; and it was one of the sins of Sodom, for which that city was destroyed, that she did not give to supply the poor and needy, Ezek. xvi. 49. "This was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness in her, and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy."

And have we not reason to fear, that much guilt lies upon this land on this very account? We have a high conceit of ourselves for religion; but do not many other countries shame us? Do not the Papists shame us in this respect? So far as I can understand the tenor of the Christian religion, and the rules of the word of God, the same are in no measure in this respect answered by the general practice of most people in this land. There are many who make a high profession of religion; but do not many of them need to be informed by the apostle James, what true religion is?

Let every one examine himself, whether he do not lie under guilt in this matter. Have you not forborne to give, when you have seen your brother in want? Have you not shut up the bowels of your compassion towards him, and forborne to deny yourselves a little for his relief? Or when you have given, have you not done it grudgingly? And has it not inwardly hurt and grieved you? You have looked upon what you have given, as lost: so that what you have given, has been, as the apostle expresses it, a matter of covetousness, rather than of bounty. Have not occasions of giving been unwelcome to you? Have you not been uneasy under them? Have you not felt a considerable backwardness to give? Have you not, from a grudging, backward spirit, been apt to raise objections against giving, and to excuse yourselves? Such things as these bring guilt upon the soul, and often bring down the curse of God upon the persons in whom these things are found, as we may show more fully hereafter.

SECT. III.

An Exhortation to the Duty of Charity to the Poor.

We are professors of Christianity, we pretend to be the followers of Jesus, and to make the gospel our rule. We have the Bible in our houses. Let us not behave ourselves in this particular, as if we had never seen the Bible, as if we were

ignorant of Christianity, and knew not what kind of religion it is. What will it signify to pretend to be Christians, and at the same time to live in the neglect of those rules of Christianity which are mainly insisted on in it? But there are several things which I would here propose to your consideration.

I. Consider that what you have is not your own; *i. e.* you have only a subordinate right. Your goods are only lent to you of God, to be improved by you in such ways as he directs. You yourselves are not your own; 1 Cor. vi. 20. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; your body and your spirit are God's." And if you yourselves are not your own, so then neither are your possessions your own. Many of you have by covenant given up yourselves and all you have to God. You have disowned and renounced any right in yourselves or in any thing that you have, and have given to God all the absolute right; and if you be true Christians, you have done it from the heart.

Your money and your goods are not your own; they are only committed to you as stewards, to be used for him who committed them to you; 1 Pet. iv. 9, 10. "Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." A steward has no business with his master's goods, to use them any otherwise than for the benefit of his master and his family, or according to his masters' direction. He hath no business to use them, as if he were the proprietor of them; he hath nothing to do with them, only as he is to use them for his master. He is to give every one of his master's family their portion of meat in due season.

But if instead of that, he hoards up his master's goods for himself, and withholds them from those of the household, so that some of the family are pinched for want of food and clothing; he is therein guilty of robbing his master and embezzling his substance. And would any householder endure such a steward? If he discovered him in such a practice, would he not take his goods out of his hands, and commit them to the care of some other steward, who should give every one of his family his portion of meat in due season? Remember that all of us must give account of our stewardship, and how we have disposed of those goods which our master has put into our hands. And if when our master comes to reckon with us, it be found, that we denied some of his family their proper provision, while we have hoarded up for ourselves, as if we had been the proprietors of our master's goods, what account shall we give of this?

II. God tells us, that he shall look upon what is done in charity to our neighbours in want, as done unto him; and

what is denied unto them, as denied unto him. Prov. xix. 17. "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord." God hath been pleased to make our needy neighbours his receivers. He in his infinite mercy hath so interested himself in their case, that he looks upon what is given in charity to them, as given to himself; and when we deny them what their circumstances require of us, he looks upon it that we therein rob him of his right.

Christ teaches us, that we are to look upon our fellow Christians in this case as himself, and that our giving or withholding from them, shall be taken, as if we so behaved ourselves towards him; see Matt. xxv. 40. There Christ says to the righteous on his right hand, who had supplied the wants of the needy, "In that ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." In like manner he says to the wicked who had not shown mercy to the poor, ver. 45, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these ye did it not to me."—Now what stronger enforcement of this duty can be conceived, or is possible than this, that Jesus Christ looks upon our kind and bountiful, or unkind and uncharitable treatment of our needy neighbours, as such a treatment of himself?

If Christ himself were upon earth, and dwelt among us in a frail body, as he once did, and were in calamitous and needy circumstances, should we not be willing to supply him? Should we be apt to excuse ourselves from helping him? Should we not be willing to supply him, so that he might live free from distressing poverty? And if we did otherwise, should we not bring great guilt upon ourselves? And might not our conduct justly be very highly resented by God? Christ was once here in a frail body, stood in need of the charity, and was maintained by it; Luke viii. 2, 3. "And certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance." So he still, in many of his members, needs the charity of others.

III. Consider that there is an absolute necessity of our complying with the difficult duties of religion. To give to the poor in the manner and measure that the gospel prescribes, is a difficult duty; *i. e.* it is very contrary to corrupt nature, to that covetousness and selfishness of which there is so much in the wicked heart of man. Man is naturally governed only by a principle of self-love; and it is a difficult thing to corrupt nature, for men to deny themselves of their present interest, trusting in God to make it up to them hereafter.—But how often hath Christ told us the necessity of doing difficult duties

of religion, if we will be his disciples; that we must sell all, take up our cross daily, deny ourselves, renounce our worldly profits and interests, &c. And if this duty seem hard and difficult to you, let not that be an objection with you against doing it; for you have taken up quite a wrong notion of things, if you expect to go to heaven without performing difficult duties; if you expect any other than to find the way to life a narrow way.

IV. The scripture teaches us, that this very particular duty is necessary. Particularly,

1. The scripture teaches, that God will deal with us as we deal with our fellow-creatures in this particular, and that with what measure we mete to others in this respect, God will measure to us again. This the scripture asserts both ways; it asserts that if we be of a merciful spirit, God will be merciful to us: Matt. v. 7. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Psal. xviii. 25. "With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful." On the other hand it tells us, that if we be not merciful, God will not be merciful to us, and that all our pretences to faith and a work of conversion will not avail us, to obtain mercy, unless we be merciful to them that are in want. James ii. 13—16. "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy.—What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

2. This very thing is often mentioned in scripture, as an essential part of the character of a godly man: Ps. xxxvii. 21. "The righteous showeth mercy, and giveth;" and again, ver. 26. "He is ever merciful, and lendeth." Ps. cxii. 5. "A good man showeth favour and lendeth:" and ver. 9. "He hath dispersed, and given to the poor." So Prov. xiv. 31. "He that honoureth God, hath mercy on the poor." Again Prov. xxi. 26; and Is. lvii. 1. A *righteous* man, and a *merciful* man are used as synonymous terms; "The *righteous* perisheth; and *merciful* men are taken away." &c.

It is mentioned in the New Testament as a thing so essential, that the contrary cannot consist with a *sincere* love to God. 1 John iii. 17—19. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." So the apostle Paul, when he writes to the Corinthians, and proposes

their contributing for the supply of the poor saints, tells them what he doth it for, *viz.* a trial of their sincerity: see 2 Cor. viii. 8. "I speak to prove the sincerity of your love."

3. Christ teaches, that judgment will be past at the great day according to men's works in this respect. This is taught us by Christ in the most particular account of the proceedings of that day, that we have in the whole Bible; see Matt. xxv. 34, &c. It is evident that Christ thus represented the proceedings and determinations of this great day, as turning upon this one point, on purpose, and on design to lead us into this notion, and to fix it in us, that a charitable spirit and practice towards our brethren is necessary to salvation.

V. Consider what abundant encouragement the word of God gives, that you shall be no losers by your charity and bounty to them who are in want. As there is scarce any duty prescribed in the word of God, which is so much insisted on as this, so there is scarce any to which there are so many promises of reward made. This virtue especially hath the promises of this life and that which is to come. If we believe the scriptures, when a man charitably gives to his neighbour in want, the giver has the greatest advantage by it, even greater than the receiver; Acts xx. 35. "I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." He that gives bountifully is a happier man that he that receives bountifully; Prov. xiv. 21. "He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he."

Many persons are ready to look upon what is bestowed for charitable uses as lost. But we ought not to look upon it as lost, because it benefits those whom we ought to love as ourselves. And not only so, but it is not lost *to us*, if we give any credit to the scriptures. See the advice that *Solomon* gives in Eccl. xi. 1. "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days." By casting our bread upon the waters, Solomon means giving it to the poor, as appears by the next words, "Give a portion to seven and also to eight." Waters are sometimes put for people and multitudes.

What strange advice would this seem to many, to cast their bread upon the waters, which would seem to them like throwing it away! What more direct method to lose our bread, than to go and throw it into the sea. But the wise man tells us, No, it is not lost; you shall find it again after many days. It is not sunk, but you commit it to providence; you commit it to the winds and waves: however it will come about to you and you shall find it again after many days. Though it should be many days first, yet you shall find it at last, at a time when you most need it. He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the

Lord; and God is not one of those who will not pay again what is lent to him. If you lend any thing to God, you commit it into faithful hands. Prov. xix. 17. "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again." God will not only pay you again, but he will pay you with great increase; Luke vi. 38. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; that is, in good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over."

Men do not account that lost, that is let out to use; but what is bestowed in charity is lent to the Lord, and he repays with great increase. Isa. xxxii. 8. "The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand." Here I would particularly observe,

1. That if you give with a spirit of true charity, you shall be rewarded in what is infinitely more valuable than what you give; even eternal riches in heaven. Matt. x. 42. "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple; verily I say unto you, he shall in nowise lose his reward."

Giving to our needy brethren, is in scripture called laying up treasure in heaven, in bags that wax not old; Luke xii. 33. "Sell what ye have and give alms, provide for yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth." Men, when they have laid up their money in their chests, do not suppose that they have thrown it away; but on the contrary, that it is laid up safe. Much less is treasure thrown away when it is laid up in heaven. What is laid up there is much safer than what is laid up in chests or cabinets.

You cannot lay up treasure on earth, but that it is liable to be stolen, or otherwise to fail. But there no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth. It is committed to God's care, and he will keep it safely for you; and when you die, you shall receive it with infinite increase. Instead of a part of your earthly substance thus bestowed, you shall receive heavenly riches, on which you may live in the greatest fulness, honour, and happiness, to all eternity; and shall never be in want of any thing. After feeding with some of your bread those who cannot recompense you, you shall be rewarded at the resurrection, and eat bread in the kingdom of God. Luke xiv. 13—16. "When thou makest a feast call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind; and thou shalt be blessed: for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. And when one of them that sat at meat with him, heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

2. If you give to the needy, though but in the exercise of moral virtue, you will be in the way greatly to gain by it in your

temporal interest. They who give in the exercise of a *gracious* charity, are in the way to be gainers both here and hereafter; and those that give in the exercise of a *moral* bounty and liberality, have many temporal promises made to them. We learn by the word of God, that they are in the way to be prospered in their outward affairs. Ordinarily such do not lose by it, but such a blessing attends their concerns, that they are paid doubly for it: Prov. xi. 24, 25. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself." And Prov. xxviii. 27. "He that giveth to the poor shall not lack."

When men give to the needy, they do as it were sow seed for a crop. When men sow their seed, they seem to throw it away; yet they do not look upon it as thrown away; because, though they expect not the same again, yet they expect much more as the fruit of it; and if it be not certain that they shall have a crop, yet they are willing to run the venture of it; for that is the ordinary way wherein men obtain increase. So it is when persons give to the poor; though the promises of gaining thereby, in our outward circumstances, perhaps are not absolute: yet it is as much the ordinary consequence of it, as increase is of sowing seed. Giving to the poor, is in this respect compared to sowing seed, in Eccl. xi. 6. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." By withholding the hand the wise man means, not giving to the poor, (see ver. 1, 2.) It intimates, that giving to the poor is as likely a way to obtain prosperity and increase, as sowing seed in a field.

The husbandman doth not look upon his seed as lost, but is glad that he has an opportunity to sow it. It grieves him not that he has land to be sown, but he rejoices in it. For the like reason we should not be grieved that we find needy people to bestow our charity upon; for this is as much an opportunity to obtain increase as the other.

Some may think this is strange doctrine; and it is to be feared, that not many will so far believe it as to give to the poor with as much cheerfulness as they sow their ground. However, it is the very doctrine of the word of God. 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7, 8. "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly: and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purpoeth in his heart so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

It is easy with God to make up to men what they give in charity. Many but little consider how their prosperity or ill success in their outward affairs depends upon Providence. There are a thousand turns of Providence to which their affairs are liable, whereby God may either add to their outward substance or diminish from it, a great deal more than they are ordinarily called to give to their neighbours. How easy is it with God to diminish what they possess by sickness in their families, by drought, or frost, or mildew, or vermin; by unfortunate accidents, by entanglements in their affairs, or disappointments in their business! And how easy is it with God to increase their substance, by suitable seasons, or by health and strength; by giving them fair opportunities for promoting their interest in their dealings with men; by conducting them in his providence, so that they attain their designs; and by innumerable other ways which might be mentioned! How often is it, that only one act of Providence in a man's affairs either adds to his estate, or diminishes from it, more than he would need to give to the poor in a whole year.

God hath told us, that this is the way to have his blessing attending our affairs. Thus, in the text, ver. 10. "Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shalt not be grieved, when thou givest unto him; because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto;" and Prov. xxii. 9. "He that hath a bountiful eye, shall be blessed." It is a remarkable evidence how little many men realize the things of religion, whatever they pretend; how little they realize that the scripture is the word of God, or if it be, that he speaks true; that notwithstanding all the promises made in the scripture to bounty to the poor, yet they are so backward to this duty, and are so afraid to trust God with a little of their estates. Observation may confirm the same thing which the word of God teaches on this head. God, in his providence, generally smiles upon and prospers those men who are of a liberal, charitable, bountiful spirit.

6. God hath threatened to follow with his curse those who are uncharitable to the poor; as Prov. xxviii. 27. "He that giveth to the poor shall not lack; but he that hideth his eyes, shall have many a curse." It is said, *he that hideth his eyes*, because this is the way of uncharitable men; they hide their eyes from seeing the wants of their neighbour. A charitable person, whose heart disposes him to bounty and liberality, will be quick-sighted to discern the needs of others. They will not be at any difficulty to find out who is in want; they will see objects enough of their charity, let them go whither they will.

But on the contrary, he that is of a niggardly spirit, so that it goes against the grain to give any thing, he will be always at a loss for objects of his charity. Such men excuse themselves

with this, that they find not any one to give to. They hide their eyes and will not see their neighbour's wants. If a particular object is presented, they will not very readily see his circumstances; they are a long while in being convinced that he is an object of charity. They hide their eyes; and it is not an easy thing to make them sensible of the necessities and distresses of their neighbour, or at least to convince them, that his necessities are such that they ought to give him any great matter.

Other men, who are of a bountiful spirit, can very easily see the objects of charity; but the uncharitable are very unapt both to see the proper objects of charity, and to see their obligations to this duty. The reason is, that they are of that sort spoken of here by the wise man, *they hide their eyes.* Men will readily see, where they are willing to see; but where they hate to see, they will hide their eyes.

God says, such as hides his eyes in this case shall have many a curse. Such an one is in the way to be cursed in soul and body, in both his spiritual and temporal affairs. We have shown already, how those that are charitable to the poor are in the way of being blessed. There are so many promises of the divine blessing, that we may look upon it as much the way to be blessed in our outward concerns, as sowing seed in a field is the way to have increase. And to be close and uncharitable, is as much the way to be followed with a curse, as to be charitable, is the way to be followed with a blessing. To withhold more than is meet, tends as much to poverty as scattering tends to increase, Prov. xi. 24. Therefore, if you withhold more than is meet, you cross your own disposition, and will frustrate your own end. What you seek by withholding from your neighbour, is your own temporal interest and outward estate; but if you believe the scriptures to be the word of God, you must believe that you cannot take a more direct course to lose, to be crossed and cursed in your temporal interest, than this of withholding from your indigent neighbour.

7. Consider, that you know not what calamitous and necessitous circumstances you yourselves or your children may be in. Perhaps you are ready to bless yourselves in your hearts, as though there were no danger of your being brought into calamitous and distressing circumstances. There is at present no prospect of it; and you hope you shall be able to provide well for your children. But you little consider what a shifting, changing, uncertain world you live in, and how often it hath so happened, that men have been reduced from the greatest prosperity to the greatest adversity, and how often the children of the rich have been reduced to pinching want.

Agreeable to this is the advice that the wise man gives us, Eccles. xi. 1, 2. "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and

also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon earth." Thou knowest not what calamitous circumstances thou mayest be in thyself, in this changeable uncertain world. You know not what circumstances you or your children may be brought into by captivity, or other unthought-of providences. Providence governs all things. Perhaps you may trust to your own wisdom to continue your prosperity; but you cannot alter what God determines and orders in providence, as in the words immediately following the forementioned text in Ecclesiastes; "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall towards the south, or towards the north; in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be;" *i. e.* you cannot alter the determinations of Providence. You may trust to your own wisdom for future prosperity; but if God have ordained adversity, it *shall come* as the clouds when full of rain, empty themselves upon the earth; so what is in the womb of Providence shall surely come to pass. And as Providence casts the tree, whether towards the south, or towards the north, whether for prosperity or adversity, there it shall be, for all that you can do to alter it; agreeably to what the wise man observes in chap. vii. 13. "Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight which he hath made crooked?"

This consideration, that you know not what calamity and necessity you may be in yourselves, or your children, tends very powerfully to enforce this duty several ways.

1. This may put you upon considering how your hearts would be affected, if it should so be. If it should happen, that you or some of your children should be brought into such circumstances, as those of your neighbours, how grievous would it be to you! Now perhaps you say of this and the other poor neighbour, that they can do well enough: if they be pinched a little, they can live. Thus you can make light of their difficulties. But if Providence should so order it, that you or your children should be brought into the same circumstances, would you make light of them then? Would you not use another sort of language about it? Would you not think that your case was such as needed the kindness of your neighbours? Would you not think that they ought to be ready to help you? And would you not take it hardly, if you saw a contrary spirit in them, and saw that they made light of your difficulties?

If one of your children should be brought to poverty by captivity,* or otherwise, how would your hearts be affected in

*The author repeatedly brings in this idea, doubtless because *Northampton*, the place where the author lived, was at that time a frontier-town, and suffered much by the incursions of the Indians from Canada, who slaughtered and captivated the people, as they found opportunity.

such a case? If you should hear that some persons had taken pity on your child, and had been very bountiful to it, would you not think that they did well? Would you be at all apt to accuse them of folly or profuseness, that they should give so much to it?

2. If ever there should be such a time, your kindness to others now will be but a laying up against such a time. If you yourselves should be brought into calamity and necessity, then would you find what you have given in charity to others, lying ready in store for you. Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days, says the wise man. But when shall we find it? He tells us in the next verse; "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth." Then is the time when you shall find it, when the day of evil cometh. You shall again find your bread which you have cast upon the waters, when you shall want it most, and stand in greatest necessity of it. God will keep it for you against such a time. When other bread shall fail, then God will bring to you the bread which you formerly cast upon the waters; so that you shall not famish. He that giveth to the poor shall not lack.

Giving to the needy is like laying up against winter, or against a time of calamity. It is the best way of laying up for yourselves and for your children. Children in a time of need very often find their father's bread, that bread which their fathers had cast upon the waters. Psal. xxxviii. 25. "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Why? what is the reason of it? It follows in the next verse, "He is ever merciful and lendeth, and his seed is blessed."

Whether the time will ever come or not, that we or our children shall be in distressing want of bread; yet doubtless evil will be on the earth. We shall have our times of calamity, wherein we shall stand in great need of God's pity and help, if not of that of our fellow-creatures. And God hath promised that at such a time, he that hath been of a charitable spirit and practice, shall find help, Psalm xli. 1—4. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him into the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." Such as have been merciful and liberal to others in their distress, God will not forget, but will so order it, that they shall have help when they are in distress. Yea, their children shall reap the fruit of it in the day of trouble.

3. God hath threatened uncharitable persons, that if ever they come to be in calamity and distress, they shall be left help-

less; Prov. xxi. 3. "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall cry himself and not be heard."

SECT. IV.

Objections which are sometimes made to the Exercise of Charity, answered.

I proceed now to answer some OBJECTIONS, which are sometimes made against this duty.

OBJECT. I. I am in a natural condition, and if I should give to the poor, I should not do it with a right spirit, and so should get nothing by it.—To this I answer:

1. We have shown already that a temporal blessing is promised to a moral bounty and liberality. This is the way to be prospered; this is the way to increase. We find in scripture many promises of temporal blessings to moral virtues; as to diligence in our business, to justice in our dealings, to faithfulness, to temperance. So there are many blessings promised to bounty and liberality.

2. You may as well make the same objection against any other duty of religion. You may as well object against keeping the sabbath, against prayer or public worship, or against doing any thing at all in religion: for while in a natural condition, you do not any of these duties with a right spirit. If you say, you do these duties because God hath commanded or required them of you, and you shall sin greatly if you neglect them; you shall increase your guilt; and so expose yourselves to the greater damnation and punishment. The same may be said of the neglect of this duty; the neglect of it is as provoking to God.

If you say that you read, and pray, and attend public worship, because that is the appointed way for you to seek salvation; so is bounty to the poor, as much as those.—The appointed way for us to seek the favour of God and eternal life, is the way of the performance of all known duties, of which giving to the poor is one as much known, and as necessary, as reading the scriptures, praying, or any other. Showing mercy to the poor does as much belong to the appointed way of seeking salvation, as any other duty whatever. Therefore this is the way in which Daniel directed Nebuchadnezzar to seek mercy, in Dan. iv. 27. "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by *showing mercy to the poor.*"

OBJECT. II. If I be liberal and bountiful, I shall only make a righteousness of it, and so it will do me more hurt than good. To this I say,

1. The same answer may be made to this, as to the former objection, *viz.* That you may as well make the same objection against doing any religious or moral duty at all. If this be a sufficient objection against deeds of charity, then it is a sufficient objection to prayer; for nothing is more common than for persons to make a righteousness of their prayers. So it is a good objection against your keeping the sabbath, or attending any public worship, or ever reading in the Bible; for of all these things you are in danger of making a righteousness.—Yea, if the objection be good against deeds of charity, then it is as good against acts of justice; and you may neglect to speak the truth, may neglect to pay your debts, may neglect acts of common humanity; for of all those things you are in danger of making a righteousness. So that if your objection be good, you may throw up all religion, and live like heathens or atheists, and may be thieves, robbers, fornicators, adulterers, murderers, and commit all the sins that you can think of, lest if you should do otherwise, you should make a righteousness of your conduct.

2. Your objection carries it thus, that it is not best for you to do as God commands and counsels you to do. We find many commands in scripture to be charitable to the poor: the Bible is full of them, and you are not excepted from those commands. God makes no exception of any particular kinds of persons that are especially in danger of making a righteousness of what they do; and God often directs and counsels persons to this duty. Now will you presume to say that God has not directed you to the best way? He has advised you to do thus; but you think it not best for you, but that it would do you more hurt than good, if you should do it. You think there is other counsel better than God's, and that it is the best way for you to go contrary to God's command.

Object. III. I have in times past given to the poor, but never found myself the better for it. I have heard ministers preach, that giving to the poor was the way to prosper; but I perceive not that I am more prosperous than I was before.—Yea, I have met with many misfortunes, crosses, and disappointments in my affairs since. And it may be that some will say, That very year, or soon after the very time I had been giving to the poor, hoping to be blessed for it, I met with great losses, and things went hardly with me; and therefore I do not find what I hear preached about giving to the poor, as being the way to be blessed and prosperous, agreeable to my experience.

To this objection I shall answer several things:

1. Perhaps you looked out for the fulfilment of the promise too soon, before you had fulfilled the condition; as particularly, perhaps you have been so sparing and grudging in your kind-

ness to the poor, that what you have done has been rather a discovery of a covetous, niggardly spirit, than of any bounty or liberality. The promises are not made to every man who gives any thing at all to the poor, let it be ever so little and after what manner soever given. You mistook the promises, if you understood them so. A man may give something to the poor, and yet be entitled to no promise, either temporal or spiritual. The promises are made to *mercy* and *liberality*. But a man may give something, and yet be so niggardly and grudging in it, that what he gives may be as the apostle calls it a matter of covetousness. What he does may be more a manifestation of his covetousness and closeness, than any thing else. But there are no promises made to men's expressing their covetousness.

Perhaps what you gave was not freely given, but as it were of necessity. It was grudgingly; your hearts were grieved when you gave. And if you gave once or twice what was considerable, yet that doth not answer the rule. It may be for all that, that in the general course of your lives you have been far from being kind and liberal to your neighbours. Perhaps you thought that because you once or twice gave a few shillings to the poor, that then you stood entitled to the promises of being blessed in all your concerns, and of increasing and being established by liberal things; though in the general you have lived in a faulty neglect of the duty of charity. You raise objections from experience, before you have made trial. To give once, or twice, or thrice, is not to make trial, though you give considerably. You cannot make any trial, unless you become a liberal person, or unless you become such that you may be truly said to be of a liberal and bountiful practice. Let one who is truly such, and has been such in the general course of his life, tell what he hath found by experience.

2. If you have been liberal to the poor, and have met with calamities since, yet how can you tell how much greater calamities and losses you might have met with, if you had been otherwise? You say you have met with crosses, and disappointments, and frowns. If you expected to meet with no trouble in the world, because you gave to the poor, you mistook the matter. Though there be many and great promises made to the liberal, yet God hath no where promised, that they shall not find this world a world of trouble. It will be so to all. Man is born to sorrow, and must expect no other than to meet with sorrow here. But how can you tell how much greater sorrow you would have met with, if you had been close and unmerciful to the poor? How can you tell how much greater losses you would have met with? How much more vexation and trouble would have followed you? Have none ever met with greater frowns in their outward affairs, than you have?

3. How can you tell what blessings God hath yet in reserve for you, if you do but continue in well-doing? Although God hath promised great blessings to liberality to the poor, yet he hath not limited himself as to the time of the bestowment. If you have not yet seen any evident fruit of your kindness to the poor, yet the time may come when you shall see it remarkably, and that at a time when you most stand in need of it. You cast your bread upon the waters, and looked for it, and expected to find it again presently. And sometimes it is so; but this is not promised: it is promised, "Thou shalt find it again *after many days*." God knows how to choose a time for you, better than you yourselves. You should therefore wait his time. If you go on in well-doing, God may bring it to you when you stand most in need.

It may be that there is some winter coming, some day of trouble; and God keeps your bread for you against that time; and then God will give you good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over. We must trust in God's word for the bestowment of the promised reward, whether we can see in what manner it is done or no. Pertinent to the present purpose are those words of the wise man in Eccles. xi. 4. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." In this context the wise man is speaking of charity to the poor, and comparing it to sowing seed: and advises us to trust Providence for success in that, as we do in sowing seed. He that regardeth the winds and clouds, to prognosticate thence prosperity to seed, and will not trust Providence with it, is not like to sow, nor to have bread-corn. So he that will not trust Providence for the reward of his charity to the poor, is like to go without the blessing. After the words now quoted, follows his advice ver. 6. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."—Therefore, (Gal. vi.9) "Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." You think you have not reaped yet. Whether you have or not, go on still in giving and doing good; and if you do so, you shall reap in due time. God only knows the due time, the best time for you to reap.

Object. IV. Some may object against charity to such or such particular persons, that they are not obliged to give them any thing; for though they be needy, yet they are not in extremity. It is true they meet with difficulty, yet not so but that they can live, though they suffer some hardships.—But,

It doth not answer the rules of Christian charity, to relieve those only who are reduced to extremity, as might be abundantly shown. I shall at this time mention but two things as evidences of it.

1. We are commanded to love and treat one another as brethren: 1 Pet. iii. 8. "Have compassion one of another; love as brethren; be pitiful." Now, is it the part of brethren to refuse to help one another, and to do any thing for each other's comfort, and for the relief of each other's difficulties, only when they are in extremity? Doth it not become brothers and sisters to have a more friendly disposition one towards another, than this comes to? and to be ready to compassionate one another under difficulties, though they be not extreme?

The rule of the gospel is, that when we see our brother under any difficulty or burden, we should be ready to bear the burden with him: Gal. vi. 2. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." So we are commanded, *by love to serve one another*, Gal. v. 13. The Christian spirit will make us apt to sympathize with our neighbour, when we see him under any difficulty: Rom. xii. 15. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." When our neighbour is in difficulty, he is afflicted; and we ought to have such a spirit of love to him, as to be afflicted with him in his affliction. And if we ought to be afflicted with him, then it will follow, that we ought to be ready to relieve him; because, if we are afflicted with him, in relieving him we relieve ourselves. His relief is so far our own relief, as his affliction is our affliction. Christianity teaches us to be afflicted in our neighbour's affliction; and nature teaches us to relieve ourselves when afflicted.

We should behave ourselves one towards another as brethren that are fellow-travellers; for we are pilgrims and strangers here on earth, and are on a journey. Now, if brethren be on a journey together, and one meet with difficulty in the way, doth it not become the rest to help him, not only in the extremity of broken bones, or the like, but as to provision for the journey, if his own fall short? It becomes his fellow-travellers to afford him a supply out of their stores, and not to be over-nice, exact, and fearful lest they give him too much; for it is but provision for a journey; and all are supplied when they get to their journey's end.

2. That we should relieve our neighbour only when in extremity, is not agreeable to the rule of loving our neighbour as ourselves. That rule implies that our love towards our neighbour should work in the same manner, and express itself in the same ways, as our love towards ourselves. We are very sensible of our own difficulties; we should also be readily sensible of theirs. From love to ourselves, when we are under

difficulties, and suffer hardships, we are concerned for our relief, are wont to seek relief, and lay ourselves out for it.—and as we would love our neighbour as ourselves, we ought in like manner to be concerned when our neighbour is under difficulty, and to seek his relief. We are wont to be much concerned about our own difficulties, though we be not reduced to extremity, and are willing in those cases to lay ourselves out for our own relief. So, as we would love our neighbour as ourselves, we should in like manner lay out ourselves to obtain relief for him, though his difficulties be not extreme.

Object. V. Some may object against charity to a particular object, because he is an ill sort of person; he deserves not that people should be kind to him; he is of a very ill temper, of an ungrateful spirit, and particularly, because he hath not deserved well of *them*, but has treated them ill, has been injurious to them, and even now entertains an ill spirit against them.

But we are obliged to relieve persons in want, notwithstanding these things; both by the general and particular rules of God's word.

1. We are obliged to do so by the *general* rules of scripture. I shall mention two.

(1.) That of loving our neighbour as ourselves. A man may be our *neighbour*, though he be an ill sort of man, and even our enemy, as Christ himself teaches us by his discourse with the lawyer, Luke x. 25, &c. A certain lawyer came to Christ, and asked him, What he should do to inherit eternal life? Christ asked him, How it was written in the law? He answers, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." Christ tells him that if he shall do thus, he shall live. But then the lawyer asks him, who is his neighbour? because it was a received doctrine among the Pharisees, that no man was their neighbour, but their friends, and those of the same people and religion.—Christ answers him by a parable, or story of a certain man, who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed from him, leaving him half dead. Soon after there came a priest that way, who saw the poor man that had been thus cruelly treated by the thieves; but passed by without affording him any relief. The same was done by a Levite.—But a certain Samaritan coming that way, as soon as he saw the half-dead man, had compassion on him, took him up, bound up his wounds, set him on his own beast, carried him to the inn, and took care of him, paying the innkeeper money for his past and future expense; and promising him still more, if he should find it necessary to be at more expense on behalf of the man.

Then Christ asks the lawyer, which of these three, the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan, was neighbour to the man that fell among the thieves. Christ proposed this in such a manner, that the lawyer could not help owning that the Samaritan did well in relieving the Jew, that he did the duty of a neighbour to him. Now, there was an inveterate enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans. They hated one another more than any other nation in the world: and the Samaritans were a people exceedingly troublesome to the Jews; yet we see that Christ teaches, that the Jews ought to do the part of neighbours to the Samaritans; *i. e.* to love them as themselves; for it was that of which Christ was speaking.

And the consequence was plain. If the Samaritan was neighbour to the distressed Jew, then the Jews, by a parity of reason, were neighbours to the Samaritans. If the Samaritan did well, in relieving a Jew that was his enemy; then the Jews would do well in relieving the Samaritans, their enemies.—What I particularly observe is, that Christ here plainly teaches that our enemies, those that abuse and injure us, are our neighbours, and therefore come under the rule of loving our neighbour as ourselves.

(2.) Another general rule that obliges us to the same thing, is that wherein we are commanded to love one another, as Christ hath loved us. We have it in John xiii. 34. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." Christ calls it a *new* commandment, with respect to that old commandment of loving our neighbour as ourselves. This command of loving our neighbour as Christ hath loved us, opens our duty to us in a new manner, and in a further degree than that did. We must not only love our neighbour as ourselves, but as Christ hath loved us. We have the same again, John xv. 12. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."

Now, the meaning of this is, not that we should love one another to the same *degree* that Christ loved us; though there ought to be a proportion, considering our nature and capacity; but that we should exercise our love one to another in like *manner*. As, for instance, Christ hath loved us so as to be willing to deny himself, and to suffer greatly, in order to help us; so should we be willing to deny ourselves, in order to help one another. Christ loved us, and showed us great kindness, though we were far below him: so should we show kindness to those of our fellow-men who are far below us. Christ denied himself to help us, though we are not able to recompense him; so should we be willing to lay out ourselves to help our neighbour freely, expecting nothing again. Christ loved us, was kind to us, and was willing to relieve us, though we were

very evil and hateful, of an evil disposition, not deserving any good, but deserving only to be hated, and treated with indignation; so we should be willing to be kind to those who are of an ill disposition, and are very undeserving. Christ loved us, and laid himself out to relieve us, though we were his enemies, and had treated him ill; so we, as we would love one another as Christ hath loved us, should relieve those who are our enemies, hate us, have an ill spirit towards us, and have treated us ill.

2. We are obliged to this duty by many *particular* rules. We are particularly required to be kind to the unthankful and to the evil; and therein to follow the example of our heavenly Father, who causes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. We are obliged, not only to be kind to them that are so to us, but to them that hate, and that despitefully use us. I need not mention the particular places which speak to this effect.

Not but that when persons are virtuous and pious, and of a grateful disposition, and are friendly disposed towards us, they are more the objects of our charity for it, and our obligation to kindness to them is the greater. Yet if things be otherwise, that doth not render them not fit objects of our charity, nor set us free from obligation to kindness towards them.

Object. VI. Some may object from their own circumstances, that they have nothing to spare; they have not more than enough for themselves.—I answer,

1. It must doubtless be allowed, that in some cases persons, by reason of their own circumstances, are not obliged to give to others.—For instance, if there be a contribution for the poor, they are not obliged to join in the contribution, who are in as much need as those are for whom the contribution is made. It savours of ridiculous vanity in them to contribute with others for such as are not more needy than they. It savours of a proud desire to conceal their own circumstances, and an affectation of having them accounted above what they in truth are.

2. There are scarcely any who may not make this objection, as they interpret it. There is no person who may not say, he has not more than enough for himself, as he may mean by *enough*. He may intend, that he has not more than he desires, or more than he can dispose of to his own advantage; or not so much, but that, if he had any thing less, he should look upon himself in worse circumstances than he is in now. He will own, that he could live if he had less; but then he will say he could not live so well. Rich men may say, they have not more than enough for themselves, as they may mean by it. They need it all, they may say, to support their honour and dignity, as is proper for the place and degree in which they stand. Those who

are poor, to be sure, will say, *they* have not too much for themselves; those who are of the middle sort will say, *they* have not too much for themselves; and the rich will say, *they* have not too much for themselves. Thus there will be none found to give to the poor.

3. In many cases, we may, by the rules of the gospel, be obliged to give to others, when we cannot do it without suffering ourselves; as, if our neighbour's difficulties and necessities be much greater than our own, and we see that he is not like to be otherwise relieved, we should be willing to suffer with him, and to take part of his burden on ourselves; else how is that rule of *bearing one another's burdens* fulfilled? If we be never obliged to relieve others' burdens, but when we can do it without burdening ourselves, then how do we bear our neighbour's burdens, when we bear no burden at all? Though we may not have a superfluity, yet we may be obliged to afford relief to others who are in much greater necessity; as appears by that rule, Luke iii. 11. "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise."—Yea, they who are very poor may be obliged to give for the relief of others in much greater distress than they. If there be no other way of relief, those who have the lightest burden are obliged still to take some part of their neighbour's burden, to make it the more supportable. A brother may be obliged to help a brother in extremity, though they are both very much in want. The apostle commends the Macedonian Christians, that they were liberal to their brethren, though they themselves were in deep poverty: 2 Cor. viii. 1, 2. "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: how in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

4. Those who have not too much for themselves are willing to spare seed to sow, that they may have fruit hereafter. Perhaps they need that which they scatter in the field, and seem to throw away. They may need it for bread for their families; yet they will spare seed to sow, that they may provide for the future, and may have increase. But we have already shown, that giving to the poor is in scripture compared to sowing seed, and is as much the way to increase as the sowing of seed is. It doth not tend to poverty, but the contrary; it is not the way to diminish our substance, but to increase it. All the difficulty in this matter is in trusting God with what we give, in trusting his promises. If men could but trust the faithfulness of God to his own promises, they would give freely.

Object. VII. Some may object concerning a particular person, that they do not certainly know whether he be an ob-

ject of charity or not. They are not perfectly acquainted with his circumstances; neither do they know what sort of man he is. They know not whether he be in want as he pretends. Or, if they know this, they know not how he came to be in want; whether it were not by his own idleness or prodigality. Thus they argue that they cannot be obliged, till they certainly know these things.—I reply,

1. This is Nabal's objection, for which he is greatly condemned in scripture; see 1 Sam. xxv. David in his exiled state came and begged relief of Nabal. Nabal objected, ver. 10, 11. "Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days, that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?" His objection was, that David was a stranger to him; he did not know who he was, nor what his circumstances were. He did not know but that he was a runaway; and he was not obliged to support and harbour a runaway. He objected, that he knew not that he was a proper object of charity; that he knew not but that he was very much the contrary.

But Abigail no way countenanced his behaviour herein, but greatly condemned it. She calls him a man of Belial, and says that he was as his name was; Nabal was his name, and folly was with him. And her behaviour was very contrary to his; and she is greatly commended for it. The Holy Ghost tells us in that chapter, ver. 3, That *she was a woman of a good understanding*. At the same time God exceedingly frowned on Nabal's behaviour on this occasion, as we are informed that about ten days after God smote Nabal that he died; ver. 38.

This story is doubtless told us partly for this end, to discountenance too great a scrupulosity as to the object on whom we bestow our charity, and the making of this merely an objection against charity to others, that we do not certainly know their circumstances. It is true, when we have opportunity to become certainly acquainted with their circumstances, it is well to embrace it; and to be influenced in a measure by probability in such cases, is not to be condemned. Yet it is better to give to several that are not objects of charity, than to send away empty one that is.

2. We are commanded to be kind to strangers whom we know not, nor their circumstances. This is commanded in many places; but I shall mention only one; Heb. xiii. 2. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." By strangers here the apostle means one whom we know not, and whose circumstances we know not: as is evident by these words, "for thereby some

have entertained angels unawares." Those who entertained angels unawares, did not know the persons whom they entertained, nor their circumstances; else how could it be unawares?

OBJECT. VIII. Some may say they are not obliged to give to the poor, till they ask. If any man is in necessity, let him come and make known his straits to me, and then it will be time enough for me to give him. Or if he need a public contribution, let him come and ask. I do not know that the congregation or church is obliged to relieve till they ask relief. —I answer,

1. It surely is the most charitable, to relieve the needy in that way wherein we shall do them the greatest kindness. Now it is certain that we shall do them a greater kindness by inquiring into their circumstances, and relieving them, without putting them upon begging. There is none of us but who, if it were their case, would look upon it more kind in our neighbours, to inquire into our circumstances, and help us of their own accord. To put our neighbours upon begging in order to relief, is painful. It is more charitable, more brotherly, more becoming Christians and the disciples of Jesus, to do it without. I think this is self evident, and needs no proof.

2. This is not agreeable to the character of the liberal man given in scripture, *viz.* that devises liberal things. Isa. xxxii. 8. It is not to devise liberal things, if we neglect all liberality till the poor come a begging to us. But to inquire, who stand in need of our charity, and to contrive to relieve them in the way that shall do them the greatest kindness; that is to devise liberal things.

3. We should not commend a man for doing so to his own brother. If a man had an own brother or sister in great straits, and he were well able to supply them, under the pretence, that if he or she want any thing, let them come and ask, and I will give them; we should hardly think such an one behaved like a brother. Christians are commanded to love as brethren, to look upon one another as brethren in Christ, and to treat one another as such.

4. We should commend others for taking a method contrary to that which is proposed by the objector. If we should hear or read of a people who were so charitable, who took such care of the poor, and were so concerned that none among them should suffer, who were proper objects of charity; that they were wont diligently to inquire into the circumstances of their neighbours, to find out who were needy, and liberally supplied them of their own accord; I say if we should hear or read of such a people, would it not appear well to us? Should not we have the better thought of that people, on that account?

OBJECT. IX. He has brought himself to want by his own fault.—In reply, it must be considered what you mean by his fault.

1. If you mean a want of a natural faculty to manage affairs to advantage, that is to be considered as his calamity. Such a faculty is a gift that God bestows on some, and not on others; and it is not owing to themselves. You ought to be thankful that God hath given you such a gift, which he hath denied to the person in question. And it will be a very suitable way for you to show your thankfulness, to help those to whom that gift is denied, and let them share the benefit of it with you. This is as reasonable as that he to whom Providence has imparted sight, should be willing to help him to whom sight is denied; and that he should have the benefit of the sight of others, who has none of his own; or, as that he to whom God hath given wisdom should be willing that the ignorant should have the benefit of his knowledge.

2. If they have been reduced to want by some oversight, and are to be blamed that they did not consider for themselves better: yet that doth not free us from all obligation to charity towards them. If we should for ever refuse to help men because of that, it would be for us to make their inconsiderateness and imprudent act, an unpardonable crime, quite contrary to the rules of the gospel, which insist so much upon forgiveness.—We should not be disposed so highly to resent such an oversight in any for whom we have a dear affection, as our children, or our friends. We should not refuse to help them in that necessity and distress, which they brought upon themselves by their own inconsiderateness. But we ought to have a dear affection and concern for the welfare of all our fellow Christians, whom we should love as brethren, and as Christ hath loved us.

3. If they are come to want by a vicious idleness and prodigality; yet we are not thereby excused from all obligation to relieve them, unless they continue in those vices. If they continue not in those vices, the rules of the gospel direct us to forgive them; and if their fault be forgiven, then it will not remain to be a bar in the way of our charitably relieving them. If we do otherwise, we shall act in a manner very contrary to the rule of *loving one another as Christ hath loved us.* Now Christ hath loved us, pitied us, and greatly laid out himself to relieve us from that want and misery which we brought on ourselves by our own folly and wickedness. We foolishly and perversely threw away those riches with which we were provided, upon which we might have lived and been happy to all eternity.

4. If they continue in the same courses still, yet that doth not excuse us from charity to their families that are innocent.

If we cannot relieve those of their families without their having something of it; yet that ought not to be a bar in the way of our charity; and that because it is supposed that those of their families are proper objects of charity; and those that are so, we are bound to relieve: the command is positive and absolute. If we look upon that which the heads of the families have of what we give, to be entirely lost; yet we had better lose something of our estate, than suffer those who are really proper objects of charity to remain without relief.

Object. X. Some may object and say, Others do not their duty. If others did their duty, the poor would be sufficiently supplied. If others did as much as we in proportion to their ability and obligation, the poor would have enough to help them out of their straits. Or some may say, it belongs to others more than it does to us. They have relations that ought to help them; or there are others to whom it more properly belongs than to us.

Ans. We ought to relieve those who are in want, though brought to it through others' fault. If our neighbour be poor, though others be to blame that it is so, yet that excuses us not from helping him. If it belong to others more than to us, yet if those others will neglect their duty, and our neighbour therefore remains in want, we may be obliged to relieve him. If a man be brought into straits through the injustice of others, suppose by thieves or robbers, as the poor Jew whom the Samaritan relieved; yet we may be obliged to relieve him, though it be not through our fault that he is in want, but through that of other men. And whether that fault be a commission or a neglect alters not the case.

As to the poor Jew that fell among thieves between Jerusalem and Jericho, it more properly belonged to those thieves who brought him into that distress, to relieve him, than to any other person. Yet seeing they would not do it, others were not excused; and the Samaritan did no more than his duty, relieving him as he did, though it properly belonged to others.—Thus if a man have children or other relations, to whom it most properly belongs to relieve him; yet if they will not do it, the obligation to relieve him falls upon others. So for the same reason we should do the more for the relief of the poor, because others neglect to do their proportion, or what belongs to them; and that because by the neglect of others to do their proportion they need the more, their necessity is the greater.

Object. XI. The law makes provision for the poor, and obliges the respective towns in which they live to provide for

them; therefore some argue, that there is no occasion for particular persons to exercise any charity this way. They say, the case is not the same with us now, as it was in the primitive church; for then Christians were under an Heathen government: and however the charity of Christians in those times be much to be commended; yet now, by reason of our different circumstances, there is no occasion for private charity; because, in the state in which Christians now are, provision is made for the poor otherwise.—This objection is built upon these two suppositions, both which I suppose are false.

1. That the towns are obliged by law to relieve every one who otherwise would be an object of charity. This I suppose to be false, unless it be supposed that none are proper objects of charity, but those that have no estate left to live upon, which is very unreasonable, and what I have already shown to be false, in answer to the fourth objection, in showing that it doth not answer the rules of Christian charity, to relieve only those who are reduced to extremity.

Nor do I suppose it was ever the design of the law, requiring the various towns to support their own poor, to cut off all occasion for Christian charity: nor is it fit there should be such a law. It is fit that the law should make provision for those that have no estates of their own; it is not fit that persons who are reduced to that extremity should be left to so precarious a source of supply as a voluntary charity. They are in extreme necessity of relief, and therefore it is fit that there should be something sure for them to depend on. But a voluntary charity in this corrupt world is an uncertain thing. Therefore the wisdom of the legislature did not think fit to leave those who are so reduced, upon such a precarious foundation for subsistence. But I suppose not that it was ever the design of the law to make such provision for all that are in want, as to leave no room for Christian charity.

2. This objection is built upon another supposition, which is equally false, *viz.* That there are in fact none who are proper objects of charity, but those that are relieved by the town. Let the design of the law be what it will, yet if there are in fact persons who are so in want, as to stand in need of our charity, then that law doth not free us from obligation to relieve them by our charity. For as we have just now shown, in answer to the last objection, if it more properly belong to others to relieve them than us; yet if they do it not, we are not free. So that if it be true, that it *belongs* to the town to relieve all who are proper objects of charity; yet if the town *in fact* do it not, we are not excused.

If one of our neighbours suffers through the fault of a particular person, of a thief or robber, or of a town, it

alters not the case: but if he suffer and be without relief, it is an act of Christian charity in us to relieve him. Now it is too obvious to be denied, that there are in fact persons so in want, that it would be a charitable act in us to help them, notwithstanding all that is done by the town. A man must hide his mental eyes, to think otherwise.

SERMON XVIII.

THE NATURE AND END OF EXCOMMUNICATION.

1 Cor. v. 11.

But now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner: with such an one, no not to eat.

The apostle reproves the church at Corinth for not excommunicating an offending person; and directs them speedily to cast him out from among them; thus delivering him to Satan. He orders them to purge out such scandalous persons, as the Jews were wont to purge leaven out of their houses when they kept the passover. In the text and two foregoing verses, he more particularly explains their duty with respect to such vicious persons, and enjoins it on them not to keep company with such. But then shows the difference they ought to observe in their carriage towards those who were vicious among the heathen who had never joined with the church, and towards those of the same vicious character who had been their professed brethren; see ver. 9—12, "I wrote unto you not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters, for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is *called a brother* be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one, no not to eat."

In the words of the text we may observe,

1. The *duty enjoined;* including the behaviour required, negatively expressed, *not to keep company;* and the manner or degree, *no not to eat.*

2. The *object;* a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner. We are not to understand merely these particular vices, but also any other gross sins, or visible wickedness. It is evident, that the

apostle here, and in the context, intends that we should exclude out of our company all those who are visibly wicked men. For in the foregoing verses he expresses his meaning by this, that we should purge out the old leaven; and explaining what he means by leaven, he includes all visible wickedness; as in ver. 8. "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and *wickedness*, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Another thing by which the object of this behaviour or dealing is characterized is, that he be one *that is called a brother*, or one that hath been a professed Christian, and a member of the church.

Doctrine. Those members of the visible Christian church who are become visibly wicked, ought not to be tolerated in the church, but should be excommunicated.

In handling this subject, I shall speak, (1.) Of the nature of excommunication; (2.) Of the subject; and (3.) Of the ends of it.

I. I shall say something of the *nature* of excommunication. It is a punishment executed in the name and according to the will of Christ, whereby a person who hath heretofore enjoyed the privileges of a member of the visible church of Christ, is cast out of the church and delivered unto Satan. It is a punishment inflicted; it is expressly called a punishment by the apostle, in 2 Cor. ii. 6. Speaking of the excommunicated Corinthian, he says, "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment." For though it be not designed by man for the destruction of the person, but for his correction, and so is of the nature of a castigatory punishment, at least so far as it is inflicted by men; yet it is in itself a great and dreadful calamity, and the most severe punishment that Christ hath appointed in the visible church. Although in it the church is to seek only the good of the person and his recovery from sin—there appearing, upon proper trial no reason to hope for his recovery by gentler means—yet it is at God's sovereign disposal, whether it shall issue in his humiliation and repentance, or in his dreadful and eternal destruction; as it always doth issue in the one or the other. In the definition of excommunication now given, two things are chiefly worthy of consideration; *viz.* wherein this punishment *consists*, and by *whom* it is inflicted.

First, I would show wherein this punishment consists; and it is observable that there is in it something *privative*, and something *positive*.

First, There is something *privative* in excommunication, which consists in being deprived of a benefit heretofore en-

joyed. This part of the punishment, in the Jewish church, was called *putting out of the synagogue*, John xvi. 2. The word *synagogue* is of the same signification as the word *church*. So this punishment in the Christian church is called *casting out of the church*. The apostle John, blaming Diotrephes for inflicting this punishment without cause, says, 3 John v. 10. "He casteth them out of the church." It is sometimes expressed by the church's *withdrawing* from a member, 2 Thess. iii. 6. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye *withdraw* yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly."

The privative part of excommunication consists in being *cut off* from the enjoyment of the privileges of God's visible people. The whole world of mankind is divided into these two sorts, those that are God's visible people; and those that are of the visible kingdom of Satan. Now it is a great privilege to be *within* the visible church of Christ. On the other hand, it is very doleful to be *without* this visible kingdom, to be cut off from its privileges, treated as belonging to the visible kingdom of Satan. For,

1. They are cut off from being the objects of that *charity* of God's people which is due to Christian brethren. They are not indeed cut off from all the charity of God's people, for all men ought to be the objects of their love. But I speak of the brotherly charity due to visible saints.—Charity as the apostle represents it, is the bond by which the several members of the church of Christ are united together: and therefore he calls it the bond of perfectness; Col. iii. 14. "Put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." But when a person is justly excommunicated, it is like a physician's cutting off a diseased member from the body; and then the bond which before united it to the body is cut or broken. A scandal is the same as a stumbling-block; and therefore while the scandal remains, it obstructs the charity of others: and if it finally remain after proper endeavours to remove it, then it breaks their charity, and so the offender is cut off from the charitable opinion and esteem of the church. It cannot any longer look upon him as a Christian, and so rejects him; therefore excommunication is called a rejection, Tit. iii. 10. "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, *reject*." This implies that the church disapproves the person as a Christian: it cannot any longer charitably look upon him as a saint, or fellow-worshipper of God, and can do no other than, on the contrary, esteem him an enemy of God; and so doth openly withdraw its charity from him, ceasing to acknowledge him as a fellow-christian, any more than the heathens. He is also cut off from that honour which is due to brethren and fellow-christians. To be a visible Christian is an honourable character: but excommunicated per-

sons forfeit this honour. Christians ought not to pay that honour and respect to them, which they pay to others; but should treat them as unworthy of that honour, that they may be ashamed. Christ tells us, they should "be unto us as heathen men and publicans," (Matt. xviii. 17.) which implies a withdrawing from them that common respect which we pay to others. We ought to treat them so as to let them plainly see that we do not count them worthy of it, to put them to shame.

Much love and complacency is due to those whom we are obliged in charity to receive as saints, because they are visible Christians. But this complacency excommunicated persons forfeit. We should still wish well to them, and seek their good. Excommunication itself is to be performed as an act of benevolence. We should seek their good by it; and it is to be used as a mean of their eternal salvation. But complacency and delight in them as visible Christians is to be withdrawn; and on the contrary they are to be the objects of displacency, as visibly and apparently wicked. We are to cast them out as an unclean thing which defiles the church of God. —In this sense the psalmist professes a hatred of those who were the visible enemies of God. Psal. cxxxix. 21, 22. "Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred." Not that he hated them with a hatred of malice or ill-will, but with displacency and abhorrence of their wickedness. In this respect we ought to be the children of our Father who is in heaven, who though he loves many wicked men with a love of benevolence, yet cannot love them with a love of complacency. Thus excommunicated persons are cut off from the charity of the church.

2. They are cut off also from the *society* which Christians have together as brethren. Thus we are commanded to *withdraw* from such; 2 Thess. iii. 6. To *avoid* them; Rom. xvi. 17. To *have no company* with them: 2 Thess. iii. 14. And to *treat them as heathens and publicans;* Matt. xviii. 17. The people of God are, as much as may be, to withdraw from them as to that common society which is proper to subsist among Christians.—Not that they should avoid speaking to them on any occasion. All manner and all degrees of society are not forbidden; but all unnecessary society, or such as is wont to be among those who delight in the company of each other. We should not associate ourselves with them so as to make them our companions. Yea, there ought to be such an avoiding of their company as may show great dislike.

Particularly, we are forbidden such a degree of associating ourselves with them, as there is in making them *our guests* at our tables, or in being *their guests* at their tables; as is manifest in the text, where we are commanded to have no company

with them *no not to eat.* That this respects not eating with them at the Lord's supper, but a common eating, is evident by the words, that the eating here forbidden, is one of the *lowest degrees* of keeping company, which are forbidden. Keep no company with such an one, saith the apostle, *no not to eat:* As much as to say, no not in so low a degree as to eat with him. But eating with him at the Lord's supper, is the very highest degree of visible Christian communion. Who can suppose that the apostle meant this, Take heed and have no company with a man, no not so much as in the highest degree of communion that you can have? Besides, the apostle mentions this eating as a way of keeping company which however, they *might* hold with the heathen. He tells them, not to keep company with fornicators; then he informs them, he means not with the fornicators of this world, that is, the heathens; but, saith he, "if any man that is called a *brother* be a fornicator, &c. with such an one keep no company, *no not to eat.*" This makes it most apparent, that the apostle doth not mean eating at the Lord's table: for so they might not keep company with the heathens, any more than with an excommunicated person. Here naturally arise two questions.

QUEST. I. How far are the church to treat excommunicated persons as they would those who never have been of the visible church? I answer, they are to treat them as heathens, excepting in these two things, in which there is a difference to be observed.

1. They are to have a greater concern for their welfare still, than if they never had been brethren, and therefore ought to take more pains, by admonitions and otherwise, to reclaim and save them, than they are obliged to take towards those who have been always heathens. This seems manifest by that of the apostle, 2 Thess. iii. 14, 15. "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." The consideration that he hath been a brother heretofore, and that we have not finally cast him off from that relation, but that we are still hoping and using means for his recovery, obliges us to concern ourselves more for the good of his soul than for those with whom we never had any such connexion; and so to pray for him, and to take pains by admonishing him.—The very reason of the thing shows the same. For this very ordinance of excommunication is used for this end, that we may thereby obtain the good of the person excommunicated. And surely we should be more concerned for the good of those who have been our brethren, and who are now under the operation of means used by us for their good, than for those with whom we

never had any special connexion. Thus, there should be more of the love of benevolence exercised towards persons excommunicated, than towards those who never were members of the church.—But then,

2. On the other hand, as to what relates to the love of complacence, they ought to be treated with greater displacency and disrespect than the heathen. This is plain by the text and context. For the apostle plainly doth not require of us to avoid the company of the heathen, or the fornicators of the world, but expressly requires us to avoid the company of any brother who shall be guilty of any of the vices pointed out in the text, or any other like them.—This is also plain by the reason of the thing. For those who have once been visible Christians, and have apostatized and cast off that visibility, deserve to be treated with more abhorrence than those who have never made any pretensions to Christianity. The sin of such, in apostatizing from their profession, is more aggravated, than the sin of those who never made any profession. They far more dishonour religion, and are much more abhorred of God. Therefore when Christ says, Matt. xviii. 17. "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican," it is not meant that we should treat an excommunicated brother as Christians ought to treat heathens and publicans; for they might eat with them, as Christ himself did; and the apostle gives leave to eat with such, 1 Cor. x. 27. and in the context gives leave to keep company with such; yet forbids to eat with an excommunicated person.—Christ's meaning must be, that we should treat an excommunicated person, as the Jews were wont to treat the heathens and publicans; and as the disciples had been always taught among the Jews, and brought up, and used to treat them. They would by no means eat with publicans and sinners; they would not eat with the Gentiles, or with the Samaritans. Therefore Peter durst not eat with the Gentiles when the Jews were present; Gal. ii. 12.

Quest. II. What kindness and respect may and ought to be shown to such persons?—I answer, There are some things by which the members of the church are obliged to show kindness to them; and these things are chiefly, to pray for them, and to admonish them.—And the common duties and offices of humanity ought to be performed towards them: such as relieving them when they are sick, or under any other distress; allowing them those benefits of human society, and that help, which are needful for the support and defence of their lives and property.—The duties of natural and civil relations are still to be performed towards them. Excommunication doth not release children from the obligation of duty to their parents, nor parents from parental affection and care toward their child-

ren. Nor are husbands and wives released from the duties proper to their relation. And so of all other less relations, whether natural, domestic, or civil.

3. They are cut off from the *fellowship* of the Christian church. The true notion of the *visible church* of Christ, is that part of mankind, which, as his people, is united in upholding his appointed worship. And the notion of a *particular* visible church of Christ is a particular society of worshippers, or of visible saints, united for the social worship of God according to his institutions or ordinances. One great and main privilege then, which the members of such a church enjoy, is fellowship in the worship which God hath appointed in his church. But they that are excommunicated are cut off from this privilege, they have no fellowship, no communion with the people of God in any part of their worship.

He who is the mouth of the worshipping congregation in offering up public prayers, is the mouth only of the worshipping society; but the excommunicated are cast out of that society. The church may and ought to pray *for* such; but they cannot have *fellowship* with such in prayer. The minister, when speaking in prayer, doth not speak in *their* name: he speaks only in the name of the *united society* of visible saints or worshippers. If the people of God were to put up prayers in their name, it would imply a receiving of them into charity, or that they charitably looked upon them as the servants or worshippers of God. But, as was observed before, excommunicated persons are in this respect cast out of the charity of the church, and it looks upon them as wicked men and enemies of God, and treats them as such.

So when a congregation of visible saints join in singing the praises of God, as the psalmist says, Psal. xxxiv. 3. "Let us extol his name together;" they do it only as joining with those who are in their charitable estimation, fellow-servants and fellow-worshippers of God. They do it not as joining with heathens; nor do the people of God say to the open enemies of God, remaining such, "Come let us extol his name together;" but they say it to their brethren in God's service. If we ought not to *join* with excommunicated persons in familiar society, much less ought we to hold *fellowship* with them in solemn worship, though they may be present.

4. There are privileges of a more *internal* nature, which those who are members of the church enjoy, from which excommunicated persons are cut off. They being God's covenant people, are in the way of covenant-blessings: and therefore have more encouragement to come to God by prayer for any mercy they need. The visible church is the people among whom God hath set his tabernacle, and among whom he is wont to bestow his blessings. But the excommunicated

are in a sense, cast ont of God's sight, into a land of banishment, as Cain was, though not debarred from common means. Gen. iv. 14, 16. They are not in the way of those smiles of Providence, those tokens of God's favour, and that light of God's countenance, like those who are within. Nor, as they are cast out from among God's covenant people, have they the divine covenant to plead, as the members of the church have. —Thus far I have considered the *privative* part of the punishment of excommunication.—I now proceed,

Secondly, to the *positive* part, which is expressed by being delivered to Satan, in verse 5. By which two things seem to be signified:

1. A being delivered over to the *calamities* to which they are subject, who belong to the visible kingdom of the devil. As they who are excommunicated are thrust out from among the visible people of God; so they are to be looked upon, in most respects, at least, as being in the miserable, deplorable circumstances in which those are who are under the visible tyranny of the devil, as the heathens are. And in many respects, they doubtless suffer the cruel tyranny of the devil, in a manner agreeable to their condition, being cast out into his visible kingdom.

2. It is reasonable to suppose that God is wont to make the devil the *instrument* of those peculiar, severe chastisements which their apostacy deserves. As they deserve more severe chastisement than the heathens, and are delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh; so we may well suppose, either that God is wont to let Satan loose, sorely to molest them outwardly or inwardly, and by such severe means to destroy the flesh, and to humble them; or that he suffers the devil to take possession of them dreadfully to harden them, and so to destroy them for ever. For although what men are to aim at, is only the destruction of the flesh, yet, whether it shall prove the destruction of the flesh, or the eternal and more dreadful destruction of themselves, is at God's sovereign disposal.—So much for the nature of excommunication.

Thirdly, I come to show by whom this punishment is to be inflicted.

1. When it is regularly and duly inflicted, it is to be looked upon as done by *Christ himself*. That is imported in the definition, that it is *according to his will*, and to the directions of his word. And, therefore, he is to be looked upon as *principal* in it, and we ought to esteem it as really and truly from him, as if he were on earth personally inflicting it.

2. As it is inflicted by men, it is only done *ministerially*. They do not act of themselves in this, any more than in preach-

ing the word. When the word is preached, it is the word of Christ which is spoken, as the preacher speaks in the name of Christ, as his ambassador. So when a church excommunicates a member, the church acts in the name of Christ, and by his authority, not by its own. It is governed by his will, not by its own. Indeed it is only a particular application of the word of Christ.—Therefore it is promised, that when it is duly done, it shall be confirmed in heaven; *i. e.* Christ will confirm it, by acknowledging it to be his own act; and he will, in his future providence, have regard to what is done thus as done by himself: he will look on the person, and treat him as cast out and delivered to Satan by himself; and if he repent not, will for ever reject him; Matt. xviii. 18. "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven." John xx. 23. "Whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." —I shall now as was proposed,

II. Endeavour to show who are the proper *subjects* of excommunication. They are those members of the church who are now become visibly wicked; for the very name and nature of the visible church show, that it is a society of visible saints, or visibly holy persons. When any of these visible saints become visibly wicked men, they ought to be cast out of the church. Now the members of the church become visibly wicked by these two things:

1. By *gross sin.* Saints may be guilty of other sins, and very often are, without throwing any just stumbling-block in the way of public charity, or of the charity of their Christian brethren. The common failures of humanity, and the daily short comings of the best of men, do not ordinarily obstruct the charity of their brethren; but when they fall into any gross sin, this effect follows; for we naturally argue, that he who hath committed some gross sin, hath doubtless much more practised less and more secret sins; and so we doubt concerning the soundness and sincerity of his heart. Therefore all those who commit any gross sin, as they obstruct the charity of their brethren are proper subjects of discipline: and unless they confess their sin, and manifest their repentance, are proper subjects of excommunication.—This leads me to say,

2. That the members of the church do especially become visibly wicked, when they remain *impenitent* in the[illegible] being after proper means used to reclaim them. M[illegible]rity, unless guilty of any gross sin, is a stumbling block [illegible]cially when the repentance immediately succeed; but [illegible]umacious; in such a guilty person remains obstinate and [illegible]ked person, and therefore case he is most clearly a visibly [illegible] to be dealt with as such; to be cast out into the wicked world, the kingdom of Satan where he appears to belong.—Nor is

contumacy in *gross* sins only a sufficient ground of excommunication. In the text the apostle commands us to inflict this censure, not only on those who are guilty of the gross sins of fornication, idolatry, and drunkenness, but also on those who are guilty of covetousness, railing and extortion, which at least in some degrees of them, are too generally esteemed no very heinous crimes. And in Rom. xvi. 17. the same apostle commands the church to excommunicate "them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine they had learned;" and in 2 Thess. iii. 14. to excommunicate every one who should "not obey his word by the epistle." Now according to these precepts, every one who doth not observe the doctrine of the apostles, and their word contained in their epistles, and so, by parity of reason, the divine instructions contained in the other parts of scripture, is to be excommunicated, provided he continue impenitent and contumacious. So that *contumacy* and *impenitence* in any real and manifest sin whatsoever, deserve excommunication.

III. I come to speak of the *ends* of this ecclesiastical censure. The special ends of it are these three.

1. That the church may be kept *pure*, and the ordinances of God not to be defiled. This end is mentioned in the context, verse 6, &c. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." When the ordinances of God are defiled by the toleration of wicked men in the church, God the Father, Jesus Christ the head and founder of the church, the religion of the gospel, and the church itself, are dishonoured and exposed to contempt. And that the other members themselves may not be defiled, it is necessary that they bear a testimony against sin, by censuring it whenever it appears among them, especially in the grosser acts of wickedness. If they neglect so to do, they contract guilt by the very neglect; and not only so, but they expose themselves to learn the same vices which they tolerate in others; for "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Hence that earnest caution of the apostle, Heb. xii. 15. looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you, and *thereby many be defiled*."

2. That [illegible] may be *deterred* from wickedness. As the neglect of proper censure, with respect to visibly wicked church members, tends to lead and encourage others to commit the same wickedness; so the infliction of proper censure tends to restrain others, not only from the same wickedness, but from

sin in general. This therefore is repeatedly mentioned as one end of the punishments appointed to be inflicted by the law of Moses: Deut. xiii. 11. "And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more such wickedness as this is among you."

3. That the persons themselves may be *reclaimed*, and that their souls may be saved. When other more gentle means have been used in vain, then it is the duty of the church to use this, which is more severe, in order to bring them to conviction, shame, and humiliation; and that, by being rejected and avoided by the church, and treated with disrespect, they may be convinced how they deserve to be for ever disowned of God; that by being delivered unto Satan, they may learn how they deserve for ever to be delivered up to him; that by his being made the instrument of their chastisement, they may learn how they deserve to be tormented by him, without any rest day or night, for ever and ever. This, with the counsels and admonitions by which it is to be followed, is the last mean that the church is to use, in order to reclaim those members which are become visibly wicked. If this be ineffectual, what is next to be expected is destruction without remedy.

APPLICATION.

I shall apply this subject in a brief use of exhortation to this church, to maintain strictly the proper discipline of the gospel in general, and particularly that part of it which consists in excommunication. To this end I shall just suggest to you the following motives.

1. That if you tolerate visible wickedness in your members, you will greatly dishonour God, our Lord Jesus Christ, the religion which you profess, the church in general, and yourselves in particular. As those members of the church who practise wickedness, bring dishonour upon the whole body, so do those who tolerate them in it. The language of it is, that God doth not require holiness in his servants; that Christ doth not require it in his disciples; that the religion of the gospel is not a holy religion; that the church is not a body of holy servants of God; and that this church, in particular, hath no regard to holiness or true virtue.

2. Your *own good* loudly calls you to the same thing. From what hath been already said, you see how liable you, as individuals, will be to catch the contagion, which is easily communicated by reason of the natural depravity, in a degree at least, remaining in the best of men. Besides, if strict discipline be maintained among you, it will not only tend to prevent the spread of wickedness, but to make you more fruitful in holiness. If you know that the eyes of your brethren observe all

your conduct, it will not only make you more guarded against sin, but more careful "to maintain good works," and to abound in "the fruits of the Spirit." Thus you will have more abundant joy and peace in believing.

3. The good of those who are *without* should be another motive. What the apostle saith with reference to another subject, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. is perfectly applicable to the case before us: "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." If strict discipline, and thereby strict morals, were maintained in the church, it would in all probability be one of the most powerful means of conviction and conversion towards those who are without.

4. *Benevolence* towards your offending brethren themselves, calls upon you to maintain discipline in all its parts. Surely, if we love our brethren, it will grieve us to see them wandering from the path of truth and duty; and in proportion as our compassion is moved, shall we be disposed to use all proper means to reclaim and bring them back to the right way. Now, the rules of discipline contained in the gospel are the most proper and best adapted to this end, that infinite wisdom itself could devise. Even excommunication is instituted for this very end, *the destruction of the flesh*, and *the salvation of the spirit*. If, therefore, we have any love of benevolence to our offending and erring brethren, it becomes us to manifest it in executing strictly the rules of gospel discipline, and even excommunication itself, whenever it is necessary.

5. But the absolute *authority of Christ* ought to be sufficient in this case, if there were no other motive. Our text is only one of many passages in the scripture, wherein strict discipline is expressly commanded, and peremptorily enjoined. Now, how can you be the true disciples of Christ, if you live in the neglect of these plain positive commands? If ye love me," saith Christ, "keep my commandments;" and, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you."—But, "He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" If you strictly follow the rules of discipline instituted by Christ, you have reason to hope for his blessing; for he is wont to bless his own institutions, and to smile upon the means of grace which he hath appointed.

END OF VOL. VI.